

A PLAIN and EASY
METHOD,

Whereby a Man of a
Moderate Capacity

May arrive at
FULL SATISFACTION

In all things that concern his
Everlasting Salvation.

To which is added, A
PARAPHRASE
ON
St. Athanasius's Creed.

By the Right Reverend Dr. EDWARD
SYNGE, Lord Bishop of *Raphoe.*

Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?
Gen. xviii. 25.

Are not my ways equal? Ezek. xviii. 29.

L O N D O N:

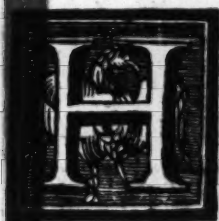
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THE PREFACE.



*H*E who has often to deal with the Consciences of Men, may soon find that, amongst other Difficulties under which they sometimes labour, these three are, to many, none of the least perplexing.

First, That they find more Doctrines frequently urged and pressed upon them, as Matters of Religion, than what they are able, or, in the midst of all their Affairs, have Opportunity, to enquire into.

Secondly, That of several of those Doctrines, into which they have endeavoured to enquire, they are able to frame but very obscure and imperfect Notions, altho' at the same time they are told, that the explicit Belief of them is necessary to every Man's eternal Salvation.

And, Thirdly, That notwithstanding all the Illustrations and Arguments that are brought for the clearing up and confirming of these Doctrines, yet still the utmost Assent which they do or can give to them, is not altogether free from some

The PREFACE.

Doubts and Hesitations, which sometimes, notwithstanding all their Endeavours to the contrary, they find unavoidably to arise in their Minds.

For the Satisfaction chiefly of such Persons these (whose Thoughts I have commonly found to be most afflicting to them) I published many Years since two little Books, (of which I have made mention §. XXXIX) and lately a third, to which I gave this Title, Religion tryed by the Test of sober and impartial Reason; but finding upon a serious review of the Whole, that something yet farther and more expressly might, and therefore ought to be said for the Cure of those more especially in whose Minds the Malady has taken very deep Root, I have once more endeavoured (and I hope not impertinently) to offer something which may be of solid Comfort and use to them.

That I may the more easily convey my Thoughts into the Mind of my Reader, I have taken upon me the Person (which I suppose him to be) of an Enquirer into Religion, and have endeavoured to advance, with all possible Clearness, from one step to another, until I arrive at that Satisfaction, which at my first setting out I suppose my self to have wanted. And if any one, of our established Church particularly, shall be offended with me, as guilty, in his Opinion, of too much Moderation, I desire him seriously to consider these Words in the second part of our Homily Of the Knowledge of Holy Scripture. "Things in the Scripture that be plain to understand, and necessary for Salvation, every one

The P R E F A C E.

Man's Duty is to learn them, to print them in Memory, and effectually to exercise them. And as for the dark Mysteries, to be contented to be ignorant in them, until such time as it shall please God to open those things unto him. In the mean season (*N. B.*) if he lack either Aptness or Opportunity, God will not impute it to his Folly.

When the Reader comes to §. XXII of this Discourse, I desire him to suspend his Judgment of it, until he has read, and seriously considered XXVII, XL, XLI, XLII. And lest he should even then mistake my Meaning, I think it may not be amiss here again distinctly and briefly to lay it down in the following Propositions.

1. *It is the indispensable Duty of every Man to keep his Mind always in a fitting Disposition for the reception of and assenting unto, all such Truths as God shall be pleased to propose unto him.*

2. *If the Mind be thus fittingly disposed, and such Truth sufficiently proposed unto it, with its proper Evidence, the Act of Assent thereunto of necessity follows, and cannot be with-held.*

3. *But to give Assent to any thing, as being true, without sufficient Evidence for the same, is altogether unreasonable, and (if the Mind be rightly disposed and under no Delusion) impossible.*

4. *Properly speaking then, the Duty of Faith consists in nothing else but a Readiness and Willingness to seek for, receive, and embrace, whatever Truth God shall be pleased any way to propose to us; the Authority or Testimony of God being*

Evi-

The PREFACE.

Evidence beyond Exception for the Truth of any Doctrine; and such Readiness and Willingness (in opposition to all Partiality and Prejudice) being that very Disposition of Mind which we are always bound to preserve.

5. But the formal Act of Assent (alone considered) neither is nor can be a Duty. For if the Authority or Testimony of God, or any other Evidence for a Proposition or Doctrine, appears to be sufficient, the Assent is necessary, and follows of course: But if the Evidence does not appear to be sufficient, then the Assent is unreasonable and impossible.

When the Reader has well consider'd what I have said upon this Argument in the Discourse itself, I cannot but think that he will be of my Opinion.

Whether the Interpretation which I have given [§.XLVII] of those Words in our Office of Baptism [All this I stedfastly believe] may at first Sight please every one, is more than I will venture to say; but if any one excepts against it, I desire he would give me his Opinion upon the following Case.

A Man bred up in Infidelity, but now in a good measure convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity applies himself to one of our Bishops (suppose) for Baptism; the Bishop examines him in the fundamental Principles of our Religion, and, finding that he has a true Notion of the Meaning of them, he farther demands whether he heartily and stedfastly believes these things of which he has the

The PREFACE.

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given an Account? The Man answers, that he cannot indeed say that his Mind is altogether free from Doubt and Hesitation, which sometimes he finds to arise within him, and may probably proceed either from the Weakness of his Understanding, or (it may be) from some Suggestion of an evil Spirit; but this with all Sincerity he affirms, that he is so far convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, and the Doctrines of Faith deliver'd by it, that he firmly purposes and resolves (thro' the Grace of God) not only to make Profession of them as long as he lives, but also constantly to lead his Life in the most exact Conformity thereunto that possibly he can, and in the Performance of all those Duties which are either expressly prescribed by that Religion, or rationally to be deduc'd from the Principles of it.

I demand whether the Bishop might lawfully deny Baptism unto such a Man for want of a stedfast Belief? And if not, then it is plain that no more is or ought to be meant by a stedfast Belief than according to the Account which I have given thereof in the above-nam'd Section.

But the greatest Objection that I conceive will be made against this Discourse is, that, by supposing that God may possibly extend some Mercy even to those who are altogether ignorant of Christianity, I may seem to have given too much Encouragement to Infidelity; to obviate which therefore I desire it may be observ'd, that all that I have said touching this Point is plainly reducible to these Three Propositions.

First,

THE PREFACE.

First, That as far as any Man's Ignorance or Error is occasioned by any Neglect or Fault of his own, so far there is all the Reason that may be to believe that God will punish him for the same.

Secondly, That if a Man, even without any Fault or Neglect of his own, is ignorant of or mistaken in those things, which, according to the Tenour of the Gospel, are necessary to our Eternal Salvation, he can have no Title to that Reward which God, thro' Jesus Christ, has only promis'd to true Believers.

Thirdly, However absolute the Authority of God our Creator is over all the Work of his own Hands, yet it cannot be suppos'd that he, who is infinitely good and merciful, will inflict Everlasting Misery upon any Man, for that which is no way to be ascrib'd or justly imputed to any Neglect or Fault of his own.

Now altho' what I have thus said may tend to vindicate Christianity from that Cruelty with which some falsely charge it, as if it doom'd all Men indifferently to the Flames of Hell who do not embrace and profess it, (and that in its Truth and Purity) without any Allowance made even for their involuntary and invincible Ignorance or Errors, yet how this should give Encouragement to any to continue in Infidelity, Error, or Ignorance of any Truth that may be profitable to his Eternal Salvation, in case he has any way of being better inform'd, is more than I am able to imagine.

A

PLAIN and EASY METHOD,

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AMongst all the Disputes and Controversies which for so many Ages have exercised the Wit and Industry of Mankind, there is, in my Judgment, but one single Enquiry that can fully recompence the most Labour and Diligence we can bestow on it: And that is, *What is necessary to be done in order to the avoiding of everlasting Misery, and attainment of eternal Happiness?*

I grant indeed that it is but a foolish piece of Cynical Moroseness for a Man to *despise*, or *contemn*, either Riches, or Honour, or Learning, or any thing that may be an Instrument of doing good, or even of innocent Comfort or Delight,

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either

either to himself or others; provided that for the obtaining of it he neither violates his Conscience nor sacrifices his Quiet and Contentment of Mind. However, if my Endeavours after any of the things prove altogether unsuccessful, I find it at least, *possible* for a Man to bear the want of them: But having an unalterable Persuasion in my Mind that my Soul is immortal, and that after this short and troublesome Life shall have an end, I must of necessity enter upon a State, either of Joy or Misery, that is to last to all Eternity: as often as I seriously think of this (and every Man I believe sometimes must think of it whether he will or no) I find it absolutely impossible to have the least true Comfort or Satisfaction with myself (whatever my worldly Condition may be) as long as I remain uncertain concerning the Way and Method to be taken for the avoiding what I cannot but dread, and the obtaining of what I necessarily and above all other things desire.

III. All that is or can possibly be necessary in my part for the escaping of this future Misery and attainment of Happiness, is to keep the Commandments of God, *Mat. 19. 17. Luke 10. 28.* and thereby secure his Favours to me. So says our Blessed Saviour in expresse Terms: And, if I suppose our everlasting Portion in the Life to come, to be assigned to every Man by no other Authority but that of God himself, (in which all Religions whatsoever do fully agree) it cannot be imagined that any thing which he has *not commanded* (that is to say neither expressly, nor by consequence) should be any way necessary in order to the obtaining a share of that Reward of which he alone has the sole and entire Distribution.

IV. If any one shall tell me, that it is not enough for me to *keep God's Commandments*; but that, in order to my Salvation, it is necessary also that I believe those *doctrinal Truths* which he has made known unto us; or those, at the least, which we commonly call *Articles of Faith*; I answer, that whatever God has commanded me to believe, I am certainly bound to believe accordingly; and if I do not so believe, I am justly to be punished with eternal Damnation. But if a Doctrine be in its self never so true, yet if God has no way laid any Command upon me to believe it, in this case, not to believe is no Sin, (for there no Law (or in other terms no Command) is, there is no Transgression; that is to say no Sin, Rom. 14. 15.) nor, consequently, can this my want of Belief be any bar or obstruction to my salvation.

V. Obedience, truly such, to a Command of God, always, in the very nature of the thing, presupposes a sufficient Knowledge both of the thing to be done, and also of its being required by God. If I am ignorant of the former of these, it must be by *Chance* and not *Choice*, if my Action is conformable to the Rule that is given me; and if of the latter, whatever I may chance to do, it must proceed from some other Principle, and not from Obedience.

VI. That therefore I may arrive at that full satisfaction and Conviction of Mind, which in this whole Affair I seek for, it must be my business resolutely to enquire, *First*, By what Rule I may at all times know, whether God has commanded such or such a thing, or not. And, *Secondly*, (by due Attendance to this Rule) What are all the general and particular things, which make up the Matter and Import of his Commands.

VII. But here let me note, once for all, that under this Expression, *viz.* *God's Commands, or Commandments*, we are always to comprehend his *Prohibitions* also: His *negative Precepts* (such as *Thou shalt not commit Adultery, Thou shalt not Steal*) being always called his *Commandments*, as well as his *positive* ones, such as *Remember to keep Holy the Sabbath Day, and Honour thy Father and thy Mother*.

VIII. By a *Command*, properly speaking, we always mean, *The Will of a lawful Superiour signified to his Inferiour as a Rule whereby he is required to act*. He who has no lawful Authority over me, let him signify his Will to me in what manner soever, yet such Signification (however it may be an Usurpation or Presumption, or by what other Name we may call it) is not, in Propriety of Speech, to be looked upon as a *Command*, or such to be obeyed.

IX. That God is mine and every Creatures lawful Superiour, is beyond all doubt. Now the Will of God is either a Rule to his own Actions; then we call it his *Decree*: Or to the necessary Actions of his Creatures; and then we call it the *Law of the Creation*, or to the voluntary Actions of such of his Creatures as are intelligent, and have the Freedom of Choice; and this same Will of God, when it is signified to any such Creature as a Rule whereby he is required to act, is what we then call the *Command of God*, or the *Law of God*, at that Word *Law* is commonly understood in the common Sense and Meaning of it.

X. From the very Nature and Definition of a *Command*, thus laid down, it most evidently follows, that however God may have been pleased to signify his Will as a Rule of Action unto me, yet this can be no *Command to me*, except I have

or at least have *sufficient Opportunity* of coming to the knowledge of it. When the Matter of a *Law* is framed, and put into proper Words, yet it does not receive its Sanction; that is to say, it is in effect no *Law*, until it is *promulged*: Nor does the *Will of God* become a *Command* until it is *signified* (that is to say *made known*) to those who are to obey it, [§. VIII.]

XI. If we will speak properly, wherever a *Command* is, there must be, *First, A Person commanding.* And, *Secondly, A Person commanded.* And if all the rest of Mankind were commanded by God to do any thing, yet if I am not commanded among the rest, the Command is to me no Command: Nor can I be said to be *commanded*, except the Command be *directed* to me; and how can any Command be said to be *directed* to him to whom it is not signified; that is to say, who neither knows any thing of it, nor has the Means or Opportunity of such knowledge?

XII. If it be objected that even *the Servant who knew not his Lord's Will* was yet to be *beaten*, tho' but with *few Stripes*, for not performing it, *Luke 12. 48.* I answer, that in the Interpretation of all our Blessed Saviour's *moral Discourses* (and more especially those that are wrapt up in parabolical Expressions) we must never depart from the Rules of evident Reason and plain natural Equity. If then in this Parable (for such it is) we suppose that this Servant's Ignorance was occasioned by some want of Diligence in himself, his Fault, in not performing his Master's Will, must also be supposed to deserve some Correction, tho' not so great as that of his Fellow-servant, who is said to have *known his Lord's Will*, and yet *not to have prepared himself nor done accordingly.* But if we suppose that the ignorant Servant had *no way of*

coming to the knowledge of his Lord's Will, and consequently that this his Ignorance was not in the least any Fault of his, for his Lord to have punished him but with *one single Stripe* for not doing that which he could not possibly know and which therefore was impossible for him to perform, would have been an unreasonable Cruelty, if not *Injustice*, and therefore cannot be supposed to have the least approbation from our Blessed Saviour. Neither will it be absurd, where the Reason of the thing requires it, to interpret a *diminutive* Expression in an *absolutely negative* Sense. *He shall be called the least* (that is, he shall not be reckoned at all as) *in the kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 5. 19. And why not in like manner here, (since the Rules of Reason do as necessarily require it if we suppose the Servant's Ignorance to have been *absolutely invincible*) *he shall be beaten with few Stripes*; that is to say, he shall not be beaten at all?

XIII. The giving of a Command necessarily implies a requiring the Performance of the thing commanded. If (for Example) I should say an hundred times to my Child or Servant, *I command you to do such a thing*, and at the same time it sufficiently appears that I do not really require the Performance of what thus in Words I seem to command, my *verbal Command*, in this case, is plainly no *real* one; that is to say, it is no *Command at all*. And if in like manner it appears that there is any thing which God neither does, nor can be supposed to require, from any Man, such a thing as this can never be the Matter of any Command of his, however the form of Words may seem in outward appearance to extend themselves to it. Now whosoever is truly *just*, and *wise*, cannot, and he that is good and merciful most certainly

certainly *will not* require any thing from any person that is *impossible*, or beyond his Ability to perform. If therefore it be ever pretended that any thing of that sort is commanded by God, it must be a Mistake; for no Truth can be more evident than this, that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*.

XIV. In the very Nature and Notion of a Command, as given to a voluntary Agent, it is also necessarily implied that it is in the power of the Person, to whom the Command is given, *not to do the thing commanded*. For instance, It may, upon occasion, be proper to command a Child to eat his Food; but supposing him constantly and regularly so to do; to command him to *grow in Stature, and Bigness*, would be altogether absurd. The reason is, because this is what he must necessarily do, and cannot avoid, until such time as he is come to his full Growth. The like may be said of commanding a healthy Man to be hungry when he is long without Meat, or thirsty without Drink, or cold when he is in the Snow, or hot when he is in a warm Bath; for these are things of *natural Necessity*, and not of *voluntary Choice*, and therefore are altogether *uncapable of being the Matter of a Command*. If therefore any one, upon occasion, shall tell me that God has commanded me to do this, or that thing, which yet I cannot avoid doing if I would, but must of Necessity do whether I will or no, I must look upon this also as a Mistake; and that for the Reason which I have just now given.

XV. Fabulous Stories and feigned Miracles, cunningly contrived, and confidently imposed upon ignorant or unthinking Men; Custom and Tradition, which, from a slender beginning, may

in Tract of Time grow strong and prevalent; the Authority of Men in Power, or of Repute for their supposed Learning or Sanctity; temporal Encouragement on the one hand, or Persecution on the other; or whatever else may have an Influence upon the *Imagination* or *Passions* of Mankind, all or any of these things, I say, may by themselves alone be very instrumental in supporting and maintaining of *Superstition*, whose Residence is chiefly in the *Fancy*: But *true Religion* which is a *sober and serious Persuasion of the Mind* (whatever collateral Helps may be given it) must always necessarily have its *ultimate Foundation* in clear and solid *Reason*. If I were not first *Rational*, it would be impossible that I could ever be truly *Religious*; and if I had not a well grounded *Reason of the Hope that is in me* [1 Pet. 3. 15.] my Religion would be no better than a *House built upon the Sand* [Mat. 7. 26.] or indeed a *Castle in the Air*.

XVI. To give a few short Hints of some of the Proofs which may be brought for Religion; it is but a self-evident Principle, engrafted in every Man's *Reason*, that *where no Cause is, there can be no Effect*. If ever therefore we could suppose that there was so much as *one Instant* wherein nothing did at all exist, it is demonstration that nothing could ever be produced into Existence: From whence the Consequence is no less than indubitable, That therefore there is some first and eternal Cause of all those Effects which have been and are daily produced; that is, in other Terms, that there is a *Being who made all other things but is Himself without beginning*, whom we call by the Name of *G O D*.

XVII. And, after the same manner, every other Truth in Religion is, by a longer or shorter

t; the *Chain of Consequences*, to be deduced from some
 te the plain and self-evident Principles of *Reason*.
 npon us (for Example) from the many illustrious
 cutions of *Wisdom* in the Contrivance of all the
 an *Integral Parts* of the World, of *Power* in the Frame
 Man's Structure of it, and of *Goodness* and *Benefi-*
 ay be in that Provision which therein is made for
 pport the well being of all sorts of Creatures according
 e *Religion* their several Capacities, it is most clearly pro-
Miracles, even antecedent to Revelation, that *God*, who
 made the World, is a most wise, powerful, good and
 m *beneficent Being*; and, consequently, as such, to
 ion loved, adored, worship'd, and relied upon. From
Rational Prophecies recorded in the Old Testament,
 ver and fulfilled in the Person of our Blessed *Saviour*,
 unde is evidently proved that *he is the Messiah*,
 .] whom God had promised to send into the World;
 e *human* own *Reason* sufficiently assuring us that none
 fle but God could foretel so many Particulars, in
 themselves contingent, so many Years before
 of they came to pass. From the many Miracles
 ; it that were wrought by Christ and his Disciples, it
 Man beyond Contradiction proved that *Christianity is*
no Error God; *Reason* it self most clearly informing
 that that He only who is the Author of Nature,
 nothing could thus controul it and alter its Course; and
 nothing in the bitter Sufferings and Persecutions which
 From many underwent, purely for the Testimony
 indub which they gave to these Miracles and Doctrine,
 d etc the Truth of the Matter of Fact is abundantly
 e be established: *Reason* here again informing us that
 Term such a number of Men (and such Men especially
 things they were, both for their Honesty and Sim-
 ve calcity) neither could if they would, nor would
 if they could, combine together in this manner to
 even pose an unprofitable Lye (for if it were a Lye,
 it

it must be a most unprofitable one) upon
World.

XVIII. From the universal Authority of the Holy Scriptures of the *Old Testament* from very beginning, and those of the *New Testament* as soon as they were published and made known every where obtained throughout the whole Christian Church, it beyond Controversy follows that these Writings, as they were at that time extant did authentickly contain the Doctrine of Christianity: My Reason assuring me that it was possible for such a vast multitude of People far and near professed that Religion, to come together in receiving Books that were not agreeable to the Doctrine received by them; and the evident Impossibility of universally correcting those Books in the Hands of such multitude of Men as had them, and constantly consulting them, some in their original Languages, others in their several Translations, my Reason most clearly infers that wherever all, or almost all, the several Copies and Translations do agree in the same Expressions, or exactly in the same Sense, there we certainly have the true and primitive Doctrine of Christianity. And if in a few Passages some diversity of Words or Expressions, which I am not able to rectify, or any other Cause whatsoever, has rendered the Meaning so obscure as that I have no reasonable way whereby to fix and determine it, from such Passages as these I cannot at all infer what the Will of God is, or establish any Point of Religion upon them, or any of them.

XIX. I shall prosecute this Point at present farther; but I thought it not improper to say so much to put my Reader in mind that what any Man gives a just Assent to in Matters of

must at the last appear to be founded upon
 and supported by *Reason*. No Man can give
Assent to any thing that is not *self-evident*
 (therefore needs no Proof) except the Truth
 be inferred from something else, to which,
 being true, he already has given a *just Assent*;
 this, in like manner, must either be *self-*
evident, or else inferred from some other Truth
 already assented to. So that either we
 for ever be going back, and so can never
 prove any thing at all; or else our Proof
 begin with, and so be originally founded upon
 Truth that is *evident by its own native Light*,
 therefore stands in no need of being proved.
Reason is the only Faculty that is capable of
 seeing or apprehending the *native Evidence* of
 a Truth; therefore either we must never
 make any Proof of Religion at all (an
 edifice which no Man sure will maintain) or
 the Truth of it must ultimately, and at the last,
 be upon the *Principles of Reason*: Nor is there
 any Doctrine or Rule of *natural Religion*, but
 may be very clearly established upon such
 Principles: And whatever is made known unto
 us by *Revelation*, it is all supported by this one
 inalterable *Reason*, viz. *God*, who cannot lye,
 and who gives his *authentick Testimony* to it; therefore
 it is true: Or *God*, who is the supreme Lord of
 all, has commanded it; therefore it is obligatory.
 Since then by being a *Christian* I do not
 cease to be a *Man*, nor does *Revelation* destroy
Reason, but plainly offers it self to be soberly
 examined thereby, there being no other possible
 way to gain my *just Assent* to it. I shall make the
 best use I can of *Reason* and *Revelation* together,
 in order to make the clearest Discovery that pos-
 sibly

sibly I can, of all the several Commands that has been pleased to lay upon me.

XXI. When I say [§. XIII.] that *whatsoever is impossible to be done, can never be the Matter of a Divine Command*; by *impossible*, I mean not that which is *naturally*; but also whatever is *morally* so; that is to say, whatever is beyond the reach of a Man's sincere and diligent Endeavour. For Example, It is *naturally impossible* for a Man to fly, because all the Art and Industry in the World can never furnish him with Wings for that purpose; but it is only *morally* so for a Man, who is bred to the Spade or Hammer, and cannot become a great Linguist or Mathematician, because that he wants a Capacity or *natural Ability* for it; but because he is altogether unfurnished with the Means whereby alone he might arrive unto those Attainments. And whosoever seriously considers the *Wisdom and Justice*, as well as the *Power and Goodness* of God, will easily conclude that he will no more require, nor consequently command the latter of these things than the former.

XXII. If at any time I have sufficient Evidence or Proof of the Truth of a Doctrine or Proposition, it is not in my power to *with-hold my Assent from it*; and if I want such Proof or Evidence as to me appears to be sufficient, it is impossible for me to *give my Assent unto it*. whence it follows [by §. XIII, XIV.] that I cannot *or with-hold my Assent to; or from any Doctrine* (formally taken as the Schools speak) *subject Matter of any Command of God*; and therefore, if *Faith* be a thing commanded or required of him (as most certainly it is) it must be on some other account, and not only as a *bare Belief* (which is one sort of *Assent*) given to any speculative Truth whatsoever. [See farther, §. XL, XLI, XLII.]

that XXIII. If, for want of some sort of reasonable
 information, or of Capacity of Understanding, I
 had had any the least Apprehension of God,
 his Will (which is taken to be the Case of some
 savage People in the World) it could not
 have been said that God had *given me any*
Command at all; for to whom God's Will
 at all signified, to him no Command from
 him is given, [§. VIII.] And where there is no suf-
 ficient, either Information to give, or Capacity to
 receive, any manner of Knowledge or Apprehen-
 sion of any thing, to such a Man that thing, what-
 ever it is, can never be said to have been *signifi-*
cantly nor can any one be said to have *received a*
Command, or that it is *directed* to him, except he
 knows it, or at least has some Opportunity of com-
 ing to the Knowledge of it, [§. X, XI.] From
 hence it follows, that if I had always been and
 continu'd in such a State of profound and invin-
 cible Ignorance, I could not all that while have
 been said to have *broken* any Command of God,
 having never *received* any, and consequently,
 whatever he might be pleas'd in such a Case to do
 to me by his *absolute Authority* (which by his Crea-
 tures ought always to be submitted to, and never
 disputed) he could not be said to *punish* me for
 my *Disobedience*; for he that has *received* no Com-
 mand, cannot be truly said to have been *disobedi-*
ent to any.

XXIV. But having been often told and assur'd
 by some who appear to have lov'd me, and by
 many who could have no Interest to deceive me)
 that there is a God most wise, good, just, and
 powerful, who made all things, and has given
 unto Mankind certain Commands or Laws, by
 which he requires that they should regulate their
 Actions, whereof he will one Day demand a strict
 Account

Account from them, even thus much Notice it if as yet I had no more, I take to be a sufficient *Signification of God's Will*; that is to say, [*§. V.*] a *Command* from God to me that I should with Seriousness make a farther and strict Enquiry these Matters; and if there be a great Debt Account to come (and who can assure me there is not?) what *Excuse* can I be supposed make for my self when I shall be taxed with Breach of all God's Commands? If I should plead for my self that I did not *know* them, therefore cannot be said to have *disobey'd* them, may be reply'd, that I had Warning sufficient given me to have put me upon a diligent Enquiry after them, which if I neglected to make, is altogether inexcusable, the least [*probable*] Information that is any way given to an *Inferior* of the Will of his *Superior* being sufficient to lay him under an Obligation at least to make a farther Search, if haply he may come to a fuller and clearer Discovery of it; the Servant who has sufficient Opportunity of knowing his Lord's Will but declines it, is almost as much to blame, I think, as he who knows it, yet does not perform it, and therefore most justly comes under the Condemnation of being *beaten with many Stripes*. Luke 12. 47.

XXV. To make the best Enquiry (then) that I can into the Will of God, in order to the Regulation of all my Actions thereby, is so very evidently my Duty, that it is not possible for me not to have a fuller Conviction of any Truth whatsoever, and if I am negligent, or do any way prevaricate in this great and important Search, my own Conscience must condemn me, and plainly tell me that I most justly deserve the utmost Punishment, and that the Divine Vengeance shall think fit or just.

dict upon me; but if with all Sincerity and
 lightness of Intention I use my most diligent
 efforts in this whole Affair, I am on the other
 as well assur'd that more than this God nei-
 does nor ever will *require* from me, for what-
 is beyond my most sincere and diligent En-
 ous is to me, if not *naturally*, yet at least
impossible, and whatsoever is either of these
impossible can never be the Matter of any of
 Commands, or, in other Terms, cannot be
 ed by him, [§. XXI.]

VI. It will be objected, that, according to
 Doctrine, an honest Heathen has as good a
 to Eternal Salvation as a Christian. I an-
 not at all. If we suppose a Man (whether
 en or Turk, or whatever he is) to be thus
 sincere and diligent, first in making all pos-
 Enquiry into the Will of God, and then in
 elling it as far as ever he comes to the Know-
 of it, it will follow from what I have said
 God neither will nor can *punish* him for not
 more, *i. e.* for not doing that which was
 ible, and therefore neither was nor could be
 ed from him, [§. XIII. XXI.] But on the other
 to entitle a Man to Salvation, which is a
 rd, there must of necessity be either some *Me-*
 the Person or some *Promise* of God sufficient
 ound this Title upon. As to the former of
 e, it is impossible, I think, in the very nature
 the thing, for Man to *merit* any thing from
 to whose free Bounty alone we entirely owe
 that we are or have, whose Dominion over us
 absolute, and without any Limitation, except
 in his own Mercy and Goodness, and to whose
 opiness, or Well-being, all Mankind, or even
 the whole Creation, cannot add so much as one
 le Grain. And, for the latter, what God in
 his

his infinite Mercy may do, is altogether a *Promise* to us: But there is no *Promise* of Salvation, I know of, but through Faith in Jesus Christ and Obedience to the Rules of the Gospel.

XXVII. Obedience to each Command of always of Necessity is grounded upon, and supposes, an *Assent* given to all that (whatever it may be) without which the Obedience its self is impracticable. For Example is commanded *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c. Mat. 22. 37.* This Command no Man can obey except he first assent to these Truths, viz. That *there is a God, and he is endowed with such Attributes as render him amiable, or a fit Object of our Love.* It is commanded, that all Nations should be baptized *in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Mat. 28. 19.* And tho' I was baptized when I was an Infant, and had no Sense of it, yet now I am at Age, I take this Command still so far to extend to me, as to oblige me always to own, and on my part to receive that same Baptism which I so received. But I cannot do, except I first assent to the Being and Authority of the *Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, in whose Name I received my Baptism. And if we should run through the whole Catalogue of God's Commands, we should find that they all do thus pre-suppose some certain Truths without an *Assent* to which there can be no Obedience; that is to say, none that is agreeable to the plain Design of the Command. And tho' to give my Assent to, or withhold it from any Doctrine (how true or false soever) is formally a matter of a Divine Command, [§. XXII.] since it is most evident that an Error in one Point of Speculation may, in consequence, beget an unavailing

avoidable Cause of many more; and Errors in
 Comparative Points, if they prove contrary to any
 those Truths which, as I have said, are pre-
 scribed by any of God's Commands, must ne-
 cessarily mislead the Person, who thus errs, from
 the Exactness of true Obedience which is requi-
 red from every Man as far as it comes within his
 compliance: I take this to be a sufficient *Signification*
of God's Will; that is to say, a *Command from him* to
 [§. VIII.] that I should always take the best
 I can ever to keep my Mind in such a Dis-
 position, as that it may, as much as is possible,
 avoid all Errors, and receive no other Doctrine
 as what is true.

XVIII. That there are *degrees* of Strength in
 Man's assent to any Truth, according to those
 his apprehension of the Truth it self, and the
 objections that are brought for it, I take to be unde-
 niable. I give my Assent (for Example) to
 some of several kinds; some of them I can
 easily demonstrate, and therefore can never en-
 counter the least Doubt of them; for others I have
 the Concurrence of so many very probable Argu-
 ments, as amount to little less than a Demon-
 stration; and, lastly, for others again I have such
 Evidence, as gives me reasonable Satisfaction,
 and yet is not sufficient to secure my Mind against
 True Doubt that may possibly arise from some Ob-
 jections that are brought on the contrary Side:
 These *Strength* therefore of my Assent to these several
 kinds of Truths, must, in consequence, be of dif-
 ferent degrees: And, in like manner, several
 Men according to the difference of their Capa-
 bilities, or of the Proof which they have received
 of one and the same Truth, may in very differ-
 ent degrees give their Assent to it. Now the very
 strongest or weakest degree of Assent (provided it
 C really

really is an *Assent*) to any such Truth as I have been speaking of [§. XXVII.] is a rational Foundation for the Performance of any Duty, or Obedience to any Command of God, to which *Assent* to such a Truth is as a Ground-work necessarily to be pre-supposed. If I own the Being of God, and his Attributes of Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, and all other his Perfections for which he ought to be loved; altho', for want of Capacity or sufficient Information, I do it but weakly and imperfectly, and not without a Mixture of Hesitation and Doubt, yet if I do it at all, these things appear to me but a little more probable than their Contraries, the same way in the Scale turns in *Speculation*, it ought also to turn in *Practice*; and upon this Foundation I stand and am bound to love God as he has commanded: And the like Conclusion may, in the same Case, be made upon all or any other of his Commands. But at the same time it is evident that the *stronger* and *firmer* my *Assent* is to such fundamental Truth, the more *fixt* and *steady* my Obedience is like to be to any such Command as is built upon it. It appears therefore to me to be God's Will, and consequently I take for another of his Commands that, according to the best of my Capacity and Opportunities, I should always seek after the clearest and best Evidence that is to be had, for all such Truths which can find to have an Influence on my Duty. The better I am confirmed in my *Assent* to the former, the more *stedfast*, in all probabilities, shall be in the Practice of the latter.

XXIX. My most sincere and diligent Endeavours, first, to know the Commands of God together with the Truths which they presuppose [§. XXVII.] and then to keep and observe them.

ing all that is within my power, and therefore that he can be supposed to *require*, and what most certainly will *require* from me, [§. XXIV, XV, &c.] It is altogether necessary that I should well consider what is the true Nature of *Sincerity* and *Diligence*, and wherein they do consist. For if I am deceived in my Notions of these things, I may either fancy my self not to be *sincere* or *diligent*, when really I am so, and then I should be a continual Torment to my self; or I may perhaps think that I am *sincere* and *diligent*, when really I am not so, and thereby miss of that eternal Happiness which otherwise, through the Mercy and Goodness of God, I might have attained unto. Now a Man's Endeavours are then truly said to be *sincere*, when really and truly he desires to obtain and compass whatever in appearance he pretends to strive for; and *Diligence* altogether consists in *laying the Speediest and Surest Hold* upon every Opportunity that at any time presents itself, or can be gained to that purpose: And whether I do thus, without any Dissimulation, *Desire* both to know and keep the Commandments of God, and carefully *lay hold* on all Opportunities as I can, in order to the accomplishing this my unfeigned Desire, is plainly what cannot be ignorant of or deceived in, if I do but strictly examine, and put the Questions touching those Matters home to my own Conscience.

XXX. The Opportunities which different Men have of coming to the Knowledge of God's Commands, and of those Truths which must first in some degree be assented to, before our Obedience to them can be either rational or practicable [§. XXVII.] are very various, both as to their *Kind* and *Degrees*, according to the Capacity

and other Circumstances of each particular Man, and that may be a great Opportunity to one, which is very little or none at all to another. For Example, A Book that is well and rationally writ in the *English Tongue*, may possibly afford much Instruction to me in these Matters, while at the same time it would be of no Advantage to others, who either cannot Read, or are altogether ignorant of our Language; and but of very little to such as, tho' able to read English, may not have sufficient Capacity in many places fully to understand the Meaning of what is written: And the like may be said of all other ways of attaining to this Knowledge; such as frequenting the Church, hearing of Sermons, going to School or to the University, the Study of Languages, Philosophy, History or Antiquities, and whatever else may any way conduce to the rendering of Men more learned or knowing in the things of Religion, which some Men have more in their Power than others to make use of; and some again have less Capacity than others to receive Benefit by. Here then it is, in the first place, incumbent on every Man, who has the least apprehension of his Duty, or sense of God's Authority, seriously to enquire and consider what Opportunities *he himself in particular* has of any way coming to the Knowledge of Divine Commands, and of such necessary Truths as must always be pre-supposed by him that gives Obedience to them. For if with all Diligence and Sincerity he makes the best use he can of these Opportunities, and afterwards in like manner reduces his Knowledge into practice, he has then done the utmost that God requires from him. [§. XIII. XXI.] But if he be slack or negligent in the matter, or through any voluntary Omission

own remains in Ignorance of what he ought
 to do, he has no manner of Excuse to make for
 himself, nor can reasonably have any other Ex-
 cuse, than to be condemned and severely
 punished for what he cannot deny to have been
 together his own Fault, [§. XXIV.]

XXI. What and how many Opportunities
 of competent Learning may have of acqui-
 ring this Knowledge, of which I am now speak-
 ing, they are much better able to discern, each
 for himself, than I can pretend to be to tell
 them: But the generality of Mankind consisting
 of those whom we commonly call *unlearned*, who
 cannot so much as read, or if they can, yet
 want of the usual Means of farther improving
 their Understanding, have not a Capacity to ap-
 prehend any thing but what they either have been
 much used to, or else is made exceedingly
 plain and easy; I shall place my self among the
 lower rank of such sort of People, and supposing
 that I were now but beginning my Search after
lasting Salvation, I shall consider what Success
 may well be supposed to have, if I honestly and
 gently seek after the Way to it; or, in other
 words, what *Opportunities* I in such Circumstan-
 ces may have of finding out what it is that God
 commands me to do, my Obedience to such his
 commands being all that is or can be required,
 in order thereunto, from me, [§. III, IV.]

XXXII. If I take any Man, or Society of Men;
 any Book, for my Rule or Guide in this most
 important Affair, and conclude every thing to be
 a Command of God, that such *Man*, *Society*, or
Book, shall propose to me under that Notion, I
 must first and before-hand have some sufficient
 Argument to convince me of the Authority which
 any or any of them have to declare the Com-
 mands

mands of God unto me: For without this
 viction, I have no way to distinguish between
 false Christ, Prophet, Church, or Revelation
 and a true one; and consequently can have
 more Ground for the following of the latter
 the former, or indeed of any of them at all,
 til some sufficient *Argument* is offered for
 Proof of their Truth and Authority. Now
Argument must either be drawn from the Au-
 rity of some other *Man, Society, or Book*, which
 again will require the like Proof; and then
 must for ever go back, and, consequently, for
 of a beginning, can never make any Proof
 of what we intend; or else we must begin
 some one or more Principles of Reason, of which
 Truth we are sufficiently satisfied from their
 Self-evidence, and without any other Proof
 what their proper and native Light affords
 them. I find then an absolute Necessity of be-
 ginning my Search after God's Commands, and
 those Truths that have any necessary relation
 to them, upon the Ground of such Principles as
 are clear and evident to my own Reason, except
 I should be so wild as to attempt to raise a Bu-
 ilding without laying it upon any Foundation,
 §. XV. XIX.] Only this I must never forget
 through all the Enquiry that I am now about
 to make, viz. That altho' many times (it may
 be through some Defect in my Understanding rather
 than in the Argument it self) a Truth may
 seem to me to be strictly demonstrated beyond
 Doubt or Exception to the contrary, yet if, upon
 a most attentive and serious Consideration, it
 appears to have greater Probability only than
 being contradictory, it is a sufficient and reason-
 able Ground for me to proceed upon, in the regulation
 of all my Actions, as far as it can be sup-
 posed.

his such a *Truth* (granting it to be really such)
 et to have an Influence upon them, as I have
 velady shewn [§. XXVIII.]

XXIII. That some Truths then are, to every
 who rightly apprehends them, fully evident
 all, their own native Light, and without any other
 for demonstration or Proof, I take to be unquestion-

Now That all the Parts of any thing, taken to-
 e An er, are equal to the Whole, and that no one
 , w how great soever, can be equal to it; that
 the impossible for two Contradictories, at the
 for the time and in the same respect, to be true;
 of a every thing which begins to exist, must have
 begin the Cause of its Existence, and that where no
 of w ise is, no Effect can be produced; these, I say,
 their many other such things, no Man in his Wits,
 roo once understood the Meaning of the Words
 rds which they are exprest, did ever yet deny, or
 of b lieve so much as doubt of, whatever some
 and , whom they call *Scepticks*, may say or pre-
 ation . But if, by my Conversation among Man-
 es a , I had not a little learnt how to frame my
 exce ights and adapt Words to them, I very much
 a B ot whether I should have had any clear and
 on, nct Apprehension of *Equality*, *Cause*, *Effect*,
 r fo almost any other of the Notions or Ideas of
 abou gs; at leastwise so as to be able to join them
 ma ther, in order to make up even the plainest
 g ra ths. The first Opportunity therefore which I
 may I have of knowing any Truth at all, and
 yond frequently those particular Truths on which
 f, u Knowledge of God's Commands and my
 n, it dience to them, do altogether depend, is that
 than onversing with other Men; which may be
 a fo e either by discoursing with them, or reading
 gula t they have written. If then I make the best
 uppi ury I am able from such Men as I can have
 recourse

recourse to, and I really judge best qualified to instruct me; if I carefully attend to what I say, and read or hearken to such Books as I recommend, at the same time not shutting my Ears against any thing that is offered by others, whoever they are, nor in the least endeavour to bring my self to assent to or dissent from any thing because this or that Man has said it, only as, after an impartial Consideration, it appears to me to be just Reason to conclude it to be either true or false; if with Diligence and Sincerity I always proceed after this manner, I shall then have made the best use I can of my Opportunity, so do I believe that God of his Goodness will either give such Success to my endeavours as that I shall come to a right Knowledge of his Commands, or else will pardon me if in any thing I am mistaken and know how to help it. *Get wisdom, get understanding* Prov. 4. 5. *Prove all things; hold fast that which is good,* 1 Thess. 5. 21. *Try the Spirits, whether they are of God,* 1 John 4. 1. *Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?* Luke 12. And all this according to the Ability and Opportunities which God in his Providence has given you, I take to be the loud and plain Voice of Reason as well as of Holy Scripture.

XXXIV. That there is a God most wise, good and beneficent, as well as powerful, who is the Creator or first Cause of all other things, I have already concluded, [§. XVI, XVII.] And whatever Doubts or Perplexities my own Weakness, Melancholy, or the licentious Speeches of some atheistical Men, may at any time raise in my Mind about this Matter, yet as long as the Doctrine appears to me to be more probable than the contrary, it commands a proportionable degree

ment; and is a rational and sufficient Found-
 ation for the Performance of all such Duties, as
 whence may be inferred, [§. XXVIII.] The
 Difference that there is between the Root,
 or Principle from whence any Property,
 Attribute or Action proceeds, the same
 must be between the Properties, Habits, At-
 tributes or Actions themselves; however, for want
 of sufficient Variety of Words, we are often forced
 to call them by the same Name. For Example,
 whatever a *Beast* does, it proceeds only from a bare
Instinct; but *Man* acts by *Reason*, which
 may be a Principle of a very different Sort.
 Therefore, without any Solecism, we say,
 An *Ox* knows his Owner, *Isaiah* 1. 3. The *Spaniel*
 loves his Master, (with such like Expres-
 sions) because we find in the Actions of those
 creatures, as far as they are capable, the very same
 effects that in *Man* are produced by, and proceed
 from the Principles of *Knowledge* and *Love*, yet we
 do not mean that the *Act* or *Habit* of *Knowledge*
 is the same in *Man*, internally, and in it self alone con-
 sidered, is the same in kind and only differing in De-
 gree from what we suppose to answer or correspond
 to in a *Beast*: For that would be in effect to
 include a *Beast* to be *rational* as well as a *Man*.
 As *Reason* in *Man* altogether differs from
Instinct in a *Brute*, so is there a much greater
 difference between that *simple Intuition* by which
Beasts act, and that *rational Manner of Deduction*,
 which is the Source of Human Actions. Altho'
 therefore, for want of more proper Words, we may
 be allowed to say of God, as we do of *Man*, that
 he *knows*, *decrees*, *loves*, *hates*, &c.
 For the *Reason* already given, we ought not
 to imagine that *Wisdom*, *Knowledge*, *Decreeing*, *Love*,
 &c. internally, and in themselves; as they

are in God, are the same for *kind*, and differing in *degree* from what we suppose answer or correspond thereto in *Man*, but only the outward Effects of them, as far as they appear to us, are the very same; that is to say, we affirm God that he is *wise*, because he does the very things that it is evident a *wise Man* would do, supposing him to have Power, and that his *Wisdom* continuing for its *kind* to be still the same as it is, had neither Limitation nor any other Imperfection. And in like manner we make use of Words that primarily denote certain Habits or Qualifications in Man, to express the corresponding Attributes which, from the outward Effects we undoubtedly conclude to be in God. But notwithstanding this *internal Difference* that is certainly between the Attributes of God and corresponding Qualities in Man; I have no other Rule to judge of the *outward Effects*, or Emanations of the former, but by Analogy and Proportion to the latter; and I must (for instance) conclude, that a *wise and good God* will always do whatever a Man infinitely wise and good (could suppose such a one to be) would do in like Case; and after the same manner I must reason upon every Attribute of God, of which multitudes of Examples might be given from the Scriptures, where they speak of his *Justice*, *Mercy*, *Pity*, &c. if in so plain a Case there were any necessity to produce them. Here then I have an Opportunity of Learning what are the Commands of God. From the Works of the Creation I clearly infer not only the Being of God, but also many of his Attributes, [§. XVI, XVII.] And when my Reason thus teaches me, I find to be confirmed and farther improved in Holy Scripture; of the Authority whereof I am sufficiently persuaded.

[VII, XVIII.] Let me then upon all occasions seriously and impartially consider what would be, just, good, and merciful *Man* command me to do, supposing he had the Power over me; and the very same I may conclude that God, who has all these Attributes in their utmost Perfection, will in every Case command me.

XV. Whilst what I have just now said in the preceding Section, is fresh in the Reader's Memory.

I think it not improper to digress a little, to make use of it to a farther Purpose. All who are Christians agree in this, that there is but one God alone, but the Controversy concerning the Unity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature has been no small Disturbance to the Church. The Doctrine it self I take to be very firmly grounded upon the Holy Scripture, the Authority of which is on both Sides allowed; for the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* are very often spoken of exactly in the same manner as we always speak of three several Persons, and of each of these Persons such Things are constantly said as cannot agree to any but God: whereas all the Objections that are made against it are grounded upon this one palpable Mistake, that the Objectors always understand the *Person*, *Nature*, *Substance*, and all other terms made use of in this Dispute, in the very same Signification as we use those Words when we speak of Men like our selves; for Example, *three Men*, say they, *are three distinct Men*; therefore if they were really *three Divine Persons*, they must be *three distinct Gods*. Again, it is absurd, to imagine that God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and infinite in Power can be *sent* by one: But the *Father* is said to have *sent* the *Son*, and the *Father* and the *Son* are said to have

sent the Holy Ghost; from whence they would
 fer, that therefore neither the Son nor the
 Ghost is God, with much more to the like pur
 that frequently occurs in the Writings of the
tarians. But let us see what answer they them
 would or could give to an Argument or two in
 like manner brought against some Doctrines
 they maintain as well as we. For Instance,
 as well as we, teach that *God is most wise* and
he loves Mankind, or at least all such of the
 do not by their Wickedness forfeit all Title to
 Love. Let us now suppose that against these
 Doctrines Arguments were framed after this
 ner. When we say of a Man that he is *wise*
 mean that he is one of great *Knowledge*, exact
consideration, and accurate *Contrivance* in all the
 does: And when we say he *loves* his Friend
 mean that he is *tenderly affected* with whatever
 or evil befalls him, and therefore endeavours
 he can to procure the one and prevent the
 Now *Knowledge* in a Man is a *Reception* of
Impressions which are any way made upon
 Mind by outward Objects; *Consideration* and
contrivance, properly speaking, are nothing else
 a rational *Deduction* of *Consequences* one from
 ther, and a due *Application* of them to any
 ness in Hand, and *Tenderness* of Affection
 farily supposes some degree of *Patibility* in the
 son who is so affected. But can we say that
 who existed, and had all his Attributes from
 nity, and before any thing existed besides him
 can we say of him that he *receives Impressions*
 any Objects whatever, or that he did so before
 such Object did outwardly exist? Can we say
 him who acts by simple *Intuition*, that he
duces Consequences and then *applies* them to an
 siness whatsoever? Or, lastly, can we say

who is perfectly impassible, that he is or can be
 ed with any thing ? And if we can say none
 these things of God ; have we not the very same
 arguments against God's *Wisdom* and his *Love* to
 kind, as the *Unitarians* bring against the Tri-
 of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead ? And
 we not after the same Manner argue against
 Attribute and Action of God, which for
 of more proper Words, we are forced to ex-
 in the very same Terms that we make use of
 speaking of whatever corresponds thereunto in
 ? Here then a sober *Unitarian*, as well as
 other Man, must, I think, have Recourse
 the Principles just now laid down [§. XXXIV.]
 say that as the *eternal* and *perfect* Nature of
 is altogether of a different *kind* from the *crea-*
 and *imperfect* Nature of Man ; so is there fully
 same Difference between the Properties, At-
 tributes and Actions that exist in, or proceed from
 two several Natures. By *Wisdom* and *Love*
 fore, as they are *internally* in God ; he does
 mean the same things for *kind* as he does when
 applies the same Words to Man ; for the *imper-*
 Nature of Man is by no means susceptible of
 same *kind* of Properties or Attributes as exist in
 perfect Nature of God ; nor, consequently, is
 ble of performing the same *kind* of Actions.
 by *Wisdom* and *Love* in God he means certain
 tributes of the Divine Nature, which produce
 same *outward Effects*, as far as appears to us,
 would proceed from *Wisdom* and *Love* in Man ;
 we could suppose them to be absolutely perfect.
 who therefore God is not wise with that *kind*
 sort of *Wisdom* that Man is, nor *loves* with that
 sort of *Love* that Man does ; yet we truly
 properly say that God is *wise* and that he *loves*,
 we demonstratively prove these Truths from the

outward Effects of both, atho' our weak Understanding cannot frame a Notion what the Divine Wisdom and Love *internally* and *in themselves* when at the same Time we are sensible that we joy the Benefit and Comfort of them both. I take to be a rational and satisfactory Answer and such as is to be made use of whenever Arguments are drawn from the bare Signification of any Words that are in common applied to God and Man, or any other Creature. Let us then see whether this very Answer will not in the same manner clear up all the Difficulty that arises from such sort of Objections as those above mentioned, which are usually made against the Doctrine of a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead: For when we say that there are *three persons* in the Unity of the Divine Nature, we do not mean such kind of Persons as *three Men* are, more than by *Wisdom, Knowledge, Love* or any other Attributes or Actions of God, we mean the same sort or kind of Qualifications or Actions as we mean when we apply the same Words to Man. But the meaning (as well as in so sublime a Doctrine) is, that in the Divine Nature, which is but one (and that *numerically* as the Schools speak) there is a threefold Distinction, *internally*, and *as it is in it self*, altogether incomprehensible to us; but *outwardly* in the Scripture represented to us under the proper Names of the *Father*, the *Word* or *Son*, and the *Holy Ghost* or *Spirit*; to each of whom we there see distinct *personal* Actions ascribed, and *personal* Expressions always accommodated. Altho' therefore it is beyond the Power of Human Understanding to conceive this Mystery *as it is in it self*; yet from Faith we believe it to be as God has *represented* it unto us, and this Representation we take to be the Unity

Un- sufficient Foundation for all such Duties as are
 e Di- consequent upon, or arise from the Doctrine :
 selves and because it is impossible to express our meaning
 t wo- out the use of *Words*, nor will any Language
 h. wish us with other words to express the things
 An- God, but such as are used to signify what we
 ever- comprehend to have the *nearest Correspondence* there-
 ical in *Man* ; For this Reason we are forced to
 ied the use of the Words *Person*, *Substance*, &c. not
 Lo- as they do denote unto us the things *as they are in*
 ot in- selves. (For in that respect we expressly own
 hat a- to be *incomprehensible*.) But only as they are
 vema- logically, and according to our Capacity, re-
 Doc- mitted unto us by God in his Holy Word, as
 the Foundation for several Christian Duties. And
 hree- when the Son or the Holy Ghost are said to be
 e, w- (which was the other Objection mentioned)
 are, sending it is not intended that *Directions were*
 ny o- *given them to go from one place to another*, in the
 he manner as one Man does to another, when he
 as w- bid to *send* him : But to *send*, as it is thus ap-
 But- pplied to the *Father* or the *Son*, signifies an Act in-
 ine- deed to us incomprehensible ; but as near
 ine- may be in God, corresponding to the Action of
 ical- ing in Man ; and which, for want of a more
 Di- proper Word, we are forced to express by the same
 ltog- me. This I take to be a rational Answer to
 the- the two Objections of the *Unitarians* which I
 per- have above proposed, and sufficient to satisfie
 l the- every Man who is content, with *St. Paul*, as long
 here- as he is in this Life, to *know* the Things of
 Con- GOD in part, and to *prophecie* of them in
 ther- them, and to *see* them as *through a Glass darkly*,
 stan- in a Riddle, as the Margin of our Bible renders
 ; ye- from the Greek, 1 Cor. 13. 9, 12. Nor is there
 sent- any other Difficulty in the Doctrine of the Holy
 to- trinity, as it is expressed either in the Holy Scrip-

ture, or in the Creeds or Liturgy of our Church, but what in the same manner may be fairly counted for, altho' I must own that some of the Explications which private and particular Men have given of this Doctrine, are not, in my Opinion defensible: And if too many Men had in all Ages of the Church, been more for simple Notions, and Victory in speculative Computations, than of promoting Peace and Christian Piety, so many Controversies had been multiplied, as have been about this and the Articles of our Religion, the many evil Consequences of which ought to stir up every good Man to have recourse to the only Remedy which is a rational Way, and such as is proper to Men, and ever be hoped to put an End to them; I do first to fix and agree upon the *Notions* of Terms, and the *proper, analogical, or metaphorical Signification of Words*, before they enter into such fierce Computations about them.

XXXVI. I take this Way of accounting for the Attributes, Actions and Persons of the Son of God, to be not only in it self very satisfactory: but also if rightly understood, of great Importance towards putting an End to all those Computations that have arisen in the World about such matters; and if the Reader is not satisfied with what I have here said, I desire him, before he passes his Censure, to have recourse to the *School Divines* who have handled this Subject; particularly I recommend to him *Tho. Aquin.* *Summa contra Gent.* cum *Com. Fran. de Silv.* Lib. 1. Cap. 33. 34. * where he will find these three Things

* *Nihil de Deo & aliis rebus univocè prædicatur, quæ de Deo & aliis rebus prædicantur, non dicuntur anavocè. Quæ dicuntur de Deo & Creaturis, dicuntur analogicè.*

r. Chappelly maintained; First that when we make
 faint of the same Words in speaking of God, and
 of any other thing; such Words are not to be
 understood *univocally*, or in one and altogether
 the same Signification: The Nature or Essence of
 had not being of the *same kind* or sort with that
 of any other thing whatsoever. Secondly that yet
 the same Words are not to be understood to be merely
 and *equivocal*, or the same in *sound* only but without
 any manner of Agreement in their Sense or Sig-
 nification. For there may and ought to be an
 ill Agreement, tho' not an *univocal* one, in the Sig-
 nification of every Word that is applied to God
 which to any Creature; that is to say, when at any
 time we speak of God in the same Words as
 we do of a Creature, the use of such Words ought
 to be altogether groundless and precarious,
 if not founded upon some just and sufficient Reason.
 Therefore hardly therefore that such Words are always to
 be understood *analogically*, that is to say with
 some reasonable and well grounded *Resemblance*
 to the Signification in such their different Applica-
 tion: For since, in this Life, we have no *imme-*
 diate or sensible Knowledge of God, but only
 so far as we can of his Nature and At-
 tributes, from those *Effects* which immediately
 enter into our Senses and Understanding, and
 before which we can demonstrate him to be the
 same *Source*; Either we must have no Conception at
 all of such his Nature and Attributes; or else we
 must conceive them as well as we can (and in
 such a Manner as may be a sufficient Founda-
 tion for our Duty) from some faint and dark
Resemblance, which we apprehend to be be-
 tween them and those of some of his Creatures.
 Or if the Reader is not willing to trouble him-
 self with the difficult Terms of the Schools; let
 him

him read *His Grace the Lord Archbishop of Lincolns* Sermon, entitled *Divine Predestination Fore-Knowledge, consistent with the Freedom of the Will*, where he will find this Matter very clear and satisfactorily handled. I have indeed two several Answers to this Sermon, but none of them have had the least Influence upon me towards the Alteration of my Judgment or Opinion. One of them, without any direct Contemnation of the Doctrine, endeavours to load it with many ill Consequences, which do not at all follow from it, if it be rightly understood, and another most palpably mistakes the Doctrine it self. And because his Grace teaches that *Wisdom, Foresight, Understanding, &c.* in God are things of another kind than what they are in *Man*; therefore the Answerer would put it upon him, if he had in Effect said that God is not wise, that he neither foresees or understands at all, &c. which is plainly as far from his Grace's meaning as the thing in it self is both impious and ridiculous. But it is time to return from this Digression, which being of great Importance in it self, almost insensibly run into a greater Length than I at first intended it.

XXXVII. To proceed then in the Way I am going: That *Christianity* has much the Advantage of all Religions, as in every other Respect particularly in that of the Probability of its Arguments which are brought to prove the Truth of it, of which I have just given a Hint [§. XV.] and that these Arguments, joined with the external Purity and Goodness of the Religion it self (I mean as it is genuine and unmixed), are sufficient to move a sober man to frame his Life according to it, and for so doing to expect his Reward hereafter: That the genuine Doctrines

of Christianity are contained in the New Testament, and as much of the Old as is not negated and the Obligation thereof cancel'd; every claus that the Scope, Design, Sense and Meaning of those Writings is still truly preserved both in the original Books and several Translations of them are extant in the World [§. XVIII.] All I say, upon the most serious and attentive Enquiry I can make; appears to me to be much more credible than the contrary; and, consequently, is sufficient to determine my Choice, and my Pursuance thereof ought to regulate my Practice [§. XXVIII.] Here then I have a farther Opportunity of coming to the Knowledge of Gods Commands; I am not debarred from reading, or having the Holy Scriptures read in my own Mother Tongue; and tho' many points of *Speculation*, and those of diverse Kinds, which there occur are beyond the reach of my Comprehension, yet Matters of *Practice*, or what I am commanded to do with respect to God, to my self, and to all Mankind, seems all along to be so plainly declared, that it is hard for an unprejudiced Person to mistake the Meaning, at least of any of the great and important Rules of Duty which are therein contained: Or if at any time a doubt or Difficulty arises in any Matter of Practice that I am not able of my self to clear up, I can easily have recourse to one or more sober and prudent Men, who, from Reason and other Passages of Scripture compared together, may help me to the Solution of the same. Which Solution I may possibly very well understand, and sufficiently judge of when it is fairly offered me by another: Altho' of my self; and without some such Help, I never should have been able to have found it out. And if after the sincere and diligent Use of these several Opportunities, which

which God in his good Providence has put in my Power, I yet remain in Ignorance or under a Mistake concerning any thing which he has commanded me to do; I have all the assurance that may be, that a wise and good God will never punish me for the want of that Knowledge which it was at least *morally* impossible for me to attain unto. [§. XXI.]

XXXVIII. But some there are who tell me that the only certain Way of coming to the Knowledge of all Things that are necessary to my Eternal Salvation, is to have recourse to the Church, and to receive and follow whatever she teaches. With all my Heart! Let me but find the certain Way to *Heaven*; and 'tis altogether indifferent to me, from whom I am to learn it. But, if I am like a rational and conscientious Man, before I can do this which they would have me; I must have clear and full Satisfaction touching three Things. First, how shall I be assured that God has commanded me to give my self up to the Guidance of any such Society of Men, who are called by this Denomination? For if he has not commanded it, it is certain that no Obligation can lie upon me to do it in order to my Salvation. [§. III.] Secondly, in the midst of all the Disputes that are about this Matter, how shall I be sufficiently informed who those Men are that *alone* do compose and constitute the Church, which is thus to be my Guide? For if I have not some *authentick Rule* whereby to know this, I may very innocently mistake one Society of Men for the Church, instead of another. Thirdly, because it is impossible (and therefore not my Duty, §. XIII) for me to apply myself to each particular Member of the Church, how shall I know who it is that has *unquestionable* Authority

to propose the Dictates of the Church unto
 and also to explain them, if I do not suffici-
 apprehend or understand them? And does
 well within such a Distance from me, as that,
 on all Occasions, I can possibly have recourse
 to him? For it is manifestly as good for me to
 have no guide at all, as not to have some sure and
 certain Way, that I may depend upon, of know-
 ing and understanding *what the Directions are which*
God's Guide gives me. To these three Questions I have
 been seeking for (not an artful, superficial,
 plausible, but) a clear, solid, and Satisfacto-
 ry answer, but never yet could meet with it from
 any of those Men, who yet would persuade me
 to live in an entire Submission to the Decisions of
 the Church, and not to inform my self of any other
 thing, save only to know what she teaches us, as being
 impossible for me to be deceived while I hearken to
 her. As the Bishop of Viviers teaches his New
 converts to do, in the Instructions by his Order,
 and with authentick Approbation and Privilege,
 published for them. But since my Eyes are of
 the same Texture and Use with those of all
 other Men, and GOD has been pleased to
 give the Light of the Sun to me as well as unto
 them, what imaginable Reason can there be why
 I should hoodwink my self, and blindfold fol-
 low any Number of Men whatsoever, without
 making the least Enquiry whether the Way they
 intend to lead me is the safest and surest to
 that Place whither I am desirous to Travel? Did
 our Blessed Saviour or his Apostles tell those to

* De vivre dans une entiere soumission aux decisions de
 l'Eglise, & de ne m'informer point d'autre chose que
 de savoir ce qu'elle nous enseigne, ne pouvant me trom-
 per en l'ecoutant. Part 1. Instr. 6.

whom

whom they preached, that thus they must believe and do, in order to their Salvation, because it was the Belief and Practice of the Church, therefore to be embraced and followed without any farther Enquiry? Or would the Gospel, we think, have ever made such a Progress in the World as in a few Years it did, if no better Reason than this had been given for it. On the contrary, they dealt with Men as with Rational Beings, they argued with them from Principles of Reason, the Evidence of Miracles and the Authority of the Old Testament, where it was received and owned, and always allowed and directed Men to examine the Strength of their Arguments, and accordingly to determine their Judgment. *If I do not the Works, my Father believe me not, But if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works,* John 10. 37. *Yea and why even of your selves judge ye not me is right,* Luke 12. 57. *Prove all Things; hold fast that which is good,* 1 Thess. 5. 21. *Believe not every Spirit but try the Spirits whether they are of God,* 1 John 4. 1. *I speak as to wise men judge what I say,* 1 Cor. 10. 15. *Be ready to give an Answer to every man that asketh you a Reason of the Hope that is in you,* 1 Pet. 3. 15. These are plain and fair Directions of the Holy Scriptures as well as of sober Reason. But that a Man should never enquire into the Grounds of this or that particular Doctrine, nor inform himself of any other thing save only to know what the Church teaches, and then to believe and receive it all wholly and solely upon her bare Authority, has not the least Countenance from either. When the Men of Berea searched the Scriptures whether those things which St. Paul preached were so Act. 17. 11. Did they disapprove of what they did, or tell them the

a wrong Method? And when *Felix* sent
 and heard him concerning the Faith in Christ,
 24. 24. Had he told him that now there
 a Christian Church planted, all that he had
 was to inform himself what were the
 Lines therein received and approved, and
 to embrace all such Doctrines without any
 Enquiry, the Governour would certainly
 despised him, and had much more Reason
 to have thought him *besides himself* than his Suc-
 cessor *Festus* had, Ch. 26. 24. But the great
 he took a very different Method: The Text
 as he *reasoned* with him, and when, amongst
 things, he came after this convincing man-
 to press the Duties of *Righteousness* and *Tem-*
perance and the Doctrine of a *Judgment to come*
 upon his Conscience, it for the present at
 awakened him and made him tremble,
 24. 25. But enough of this Controversy,
 indeed I think more than enough in so
 plain a Case. Upon the whole then I con-
 (and that, as I think, very reasonably from
 that has been said) that as the very best and
 I can do, in order to come to a true
 Satisfactory Knowledge of the Commands
 of God, is to seek for the best Information therein
 I can get from the Light of my own Reason,
 the Holy Scriptures and other Books that
 am capable of having recourse to, and from
 Conversation of such Men as I have most
 reason to believe can best inform me, and will
 not deceive me; so, if according to my Capa-
 I do all this with constant *Diligence* and
 designed *Sincerity*, and without any Byas upon
 my Mind or Understanding either from my own
 Passions, or Inclinations, or from any
 that is external to me, such as the Honours

or Profits of this World or the gratifying of
 or that Man or Party of Men, and if, as
 as I can discover what the Commands of
 are, I honestly and carefully put them in Practice
 and make them the constant and unalterable
 Rule of all my Actions, I have done all that
 lies in my Power to do in this matter ;
 consequently, all that a wise and good God
 possibly be supposed to require from me (§. XXI.)
 and if after all the above enquiry, I am
 to be mistaken touching any one or more of
 God's Commands, how far I may yet assure
 myself of a *Reward* for my Sincerity I pretend
 to know: But this I can depend upon, that
 who of his own Free-Will created me, will
punish me for not doing a Thing, whatever
 is, that appears to be beyond my Ability
 to do. [§. XXVI.]

XXXIX. After many anxious and disquieting
 Thoughts, in the Time of my Youth, concerning
 my Everlasting Salvation, having at last, through
 the Blessing of God, with great Comfort and
 Satisfaction, settled my Mind in Ease upon the
 Principles of which I have hitherto been giving
 account, about Twenty Years ago I ventured
 to publish to the World a brief and plain Account
 of the Success I had met with in my Search
 after true Religion, and therein first of the *Duties*
 which are the main Foundations or Springs of
 Duty [§. XXVII] and then of the *Laws* or
Commands of God, which are the Rule of it, in a
 Book to which I gave the Title of *A Gentle
 Religion*, consisting of three Parts and an Ap-
 pendix: And some Years after I made another,
 much shorter Draught of the same Things of
 Substance, designed for the Information of the
 meanest Capacities, and called it *An Essay*

ing the knowledge of Religion easy. If any man
 therefore, after reading these Papers, shall think
 worth his while to know more of my poor
 thoughts touching such Things as are of the
 greatest and even eternal Importance to us all,
 I refer him to those two little Books, only desiring
 first, candidly to interpret, and supply the
 defect of all such Expressions as there he shall
 find, to want that due *Exactness*, which even at
 this Time I am far from pretending to be Master
 of, and then that he would carefully examine all
 that I have delivered by the Rule of his own
 Reason, and that of the Holy Scriptures. But
 because there are some Difficulties, which (if I
 have then sufficiently thought of them) I ought
 to have mentioned in the former of the two Books mentioned to
 have proposed and answered, I will now, before
 I make an end, seriously and impartially con-
 sider what return ought to be made to them.

XL. In the first place then: The *assent* which
 we give to the Truth of any Doctrines or Pro-
 positions, from the different Grounds upon which
 they, or may be given, takes unto it self three
 different Denominations. When a Truth is either
 clear by its own Light, or so evidently fol-
 lows from some other Truth that is so, as not
 to admit of the least Possibility of a Doubt, the
 assent which I give to such a Truth as this, we
 call *Science or Knowledge*: When the Evidence
 which I have for a Truth is only *probable*, that
 is, it leaves some Room (tho' but little) for
 Doubt, my assent to such a Truth is what we
 usually style *Opinion*: And lastly, when my Assent
 is grounded purely and only upon the *Testimony*
 of another; this is what we properly term by
 the name of *Belief*, or *Faith*, which is commonly
 distinguished into *Divine* and *Humane*, according

to the Difference of the Testimony upon which a Man gives his Assent. And yet, notwithstanding this Distinction, these Terms are, in common Discourse, very often used in a greater Latitude and frequently put the one for the other: Example; that God is; that *the Worlds were created by him*; and that *he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, are Truths which to me appear to be strictly demonstrable from the plainest Principles of self evident Reason, and yet we are said to *believe* these Things, and the assent which we give unto them is called *Faith*, Heb. 11. And upon what ground soever we give our Assent unto the several Truths which are the necessary Foundation of those respective Duties which are to be built upon them, [§. XXVII] it is sufficient to denominate us *true Believers*. But in all Cases whatsoever, *Assent or Dissent* is a necessary Act of the human Understanding; consequently (formally taken) can never be a Matter of a Divine Command (as I have observed at §. XXII) the first Difficulty will be to shew what is the meaning of those Passages of Holy Scripture which require *Faith* or *Belief*, as a *Duty commanded and required* by God (1 Joh. 3. 23) threaten Punishment to those that want it, being guilty of a Crime (Mar. 16. 16)

XLI. I answer, that since all *Speech* derives its signification not from any natural, unalterable or inflexible Necessity, but wholly and entirely from human Agreement, Custom and Imposition, the plain consequence is, that whatever Latitude or Analogy is upon any occasion generally followed or received, in the Interpretation of Words or Schemes of Expression, must so far always be taken into the Construction of Holy Scripture, as that it may never be irreconcilable

with the plain, evident, and allowed Dictates
 of Reason; nor ought we to charge even mere
 human Writings (and much less those of the
 inspired Pen-men) with Contradictions or Absurdi-
 ties; if by a fair and candid Interpretation of
 the Words, they may, according to any usual
 and allowed way of speaking, be brought to ad-
 vance of another Meaning. Now altho' to assent
 to the Truth of any thing, without sufficient
 Evidence for it, or to dissent where I have such
 Evidence, is altogether out of my Power, and
 consequently can never be the Matter of a Di-
 vine Command; yet since the keeping of my
 Mind in a *due Disposition* for the *impartial Con-*
sideration of such Evidence as is offered me, and
 the *diligent Application* of my self to such Con-
 sideration, is no more than what does, or may
 in many Cases, entirely depend upon the Free-
 dom of my own Will; and upon the Suppo-
 sition of such a Disposition and Application,
 dissent to a Truth for which such Evidence is
 offered must of Necessity follow, [§. XXII.] Even
 every *Act of Assent* may in the common way
 of speech be called a *Duty*, whenever it is a
 necessary Consequence from any other thing that
 I do. It being then most evidently my Duty
 always to keep my Mind in a right Disposition
 for the reception of Truth, [§. XXVII.] and to
 be diligent in my Enquiry after all such Truths
 which may help me to find out the Commands of
 God, [§. XXIV, XXV.] wherever God has given
 sufficient Evidence of any such Truth, if I do
 not give my Assent unto it, I am certainly
 guilty of a Sin: But then the Sin it self lies
 properly in my *want of Assent* (which is a
 thing not within the compass of my Power,
 [§. XXII.] but in the want of that *due Dispo-*
sition

fusion and Application of Mind, which if I have taken right Care to preserve and maintain my Assent, upon such Evidence as I suppose afforded me, must of Necessity have followed. It is in my Power either to shut my Eyes, or to keep them open, and to turn them from an Object: But supposing my Eyes open, and otherwise sufficiently well disposed, and no Obstruction to be in the way, to prevent not to see a proper Object in a good Light, at a competent distance before them, is a thing of Choice, but of absolute and unavoidable Necessity. The Application is so easy, I need not make it.

XLII. If therefore I always keep my mind in a fitting disposition to receive *Truth*, whenever I meet with it; and if, according to my Capacity and Opportunities, I am sincerely diligent in the Search of it; whenever God in his Course of his good Providence is pleased to offer me sufficient Evidence for it, I must unavoidably give my Assent to it, as I cannot but see an Object of Sight that in a clear open Light is placed before me within a small distance, when my Eyes are open, and turned towards it: And if from all such Truths, thus I come to the knowledge of, I impartially infer all the Commands of God, or Rules of Duty, that I can find to follow from them, and, with my utmost Diligence and Sincerity do constantly conform my Practice thereunto. I have then done all that in this Case lies in my power, and consequently all that can be supposed to require from me. [§. 10.] But here arises a second Difficulty, namely, whether it is lawful for any Church to require of me an *absolute and explicit Assent* to any,

if that Doctrines? And, *Thirdly*, If any such
 may be required, What degree of it
 [XVIII.] is sufficient in order to my ma-
 following such a Profession thereof as is usually de-
 Eyed?

XLIII. For a clear and satisfactory Answer
 the second Difficulty, I lay down the fol-
 lowing Conclusions. First, If any Church shall po-
 to pronounce Damnation against any Person,
 for not believing or assenting to any Doctrine
 is, whoever, without making any Allowance either for
 want of Evidence, or of Capacity to apprehend
 such a Church I take to be in a very plain and
 Error. How far such an Assent may
 be reckoned a Duty, I think I have sufficiently
 [§. XLI.] And whosoever pronounces
 damnation upon the want of any thing be-
 and what is so, most certainly passes a Sen-
 in which God will never ratify. Secondly,
 the very Notion of a Church consists in
 that it is a Society joined together under a
 common Government or Ministry, and maintain-
 clear Communion among themselves, in order to
 in a lasting Salvation; the very utmost to which the
 of any Church (Universal or Particular)
 be supposed in this Case to extend, is to require
 explicit Assent to some certain Doctrines as a
 Condition (not absolutely of Salvation, which to
 grant or withhold is only in the Power of God,
 of Communion, or of being admitted to a
 therefore in its Government or Ministry: Nor ought
 any Church, in Reason, to say or mean more
 than this Occasion than thus, viz. You shall
 [§. X.] be owned as a Member of our Communion,
 only, except, amongst other things, you expressly pro-
 quire your Belief of such certain Truths, which
 any, commonly call *Articles of Faith*; nor shall
 you

you be admitted to the Ministry or to Share in Church-Government amongst us, you in like manner give your Assent to other Doctrines, which we commonly call *articles of Peace*: But if you cannot give your assent to these Truths or Doctrines, and therefore are excluded from the Ministry, or any part of our Church-Government, or even from our Communion it self, what Allowance God, who is the Searcher of Hearts, will make for your want of either of Capacity or Evidence, is what he himself alone is able to determine. *Thirdly*, there are some Doctrines, without an Assent to which a Man ought not to be admitted even into the Communion of any Church whatsoever, is what every Man, who has any Sense of Religion, will gainsay. For Example, That there is a God, that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, are Truths which he that should refuse to assent to, would certainly never gain admittance into any Society embodied together in Profession of any Religion that ever was or be in the World: And the same may be said of divers other Doctrines with relation to any Church that professes Christianity. But if we would have some fixt and settled Rule whereby we may know to what Doctrines a Church requires an Assent as a Condition of her Communion, or farther, of a Share in her Ministry or Government, I farther answer,

XLIV. First, Where our Assent to any Doctrine must needs be presupposed unto, and is the necessary Foundation of, that Obedience which we owe to God's Commands in order to our eternal Salvation, such an Assent as this may explicitly be required by any Church from every one whom She admits to her Communion, [See §.XXVII.] And however

Doctrine may be, yet if our Ignorance of it or
 from it, is not inconsistent with such Obe-
 dience, he that refuses to give his Assent to such a
 Doctrine, ought not, on account of such Refusal, to
 be rejected or excluded. For since the very De-
 sign of Church-Communion is in order to eter-
 nal Salvation, [§. XLIII.] and nothing is or
 can be necessary to Salvation but only Obe-
 dience to God's Commands, [§. III.] It follows,
 that so much (and no more) may be required
 for Church-Communion as is necessary in or-
 der to such Obedience; meaning by Obedience
 Conformity of Life and Actions unto that
 every Rule of God's Will which he has been
 pleased to make known unto us. Secondly, It
 is lawful, and in many Cases is highly conve-
 nient to require from those who are admitted into
 the Ministry or any Share of the Government of the
 Church, an Assent to more Doctrines than what ought
 to be required only as a Condition of Communion.
 In Church-Communion alone a Man partakes of
 ordinary Means which God has appointed
 for Salvation, (such as Baptism, the Lord's Sup-
 per, and joint Prayer and Worship with the
 Congregation) from which Means, therefore, no
 good ought, either in Charity or Justice, to be
 withheld, if he be duly qualified for them: But
 the Offices of the Ministry and Church-Government
 are appointed as Means, not of Salvation to
 those who exercise them, but of Edification to
 the rest of the People: For which Edification if
 no sufficient Provision be made, or as good Pro-
 vision as the Circumstances of things will ad-
 mit of, it is neither unjust nor uncharitable for
 those who are in Authority to prescribe any
 Rules, that are not in themselves unlawful,
 which may any way conduce to the Peace or
 other

other Benefit of the Church, as Conditions, out a Compliance with which no Man should be allowed to exercise or take any such Office on him: And upon this very reasonable Principle a Church may, amongst other things require an Assent to more Doctrines than what is thought necessary to Salvation, from all such as She admits to be either Ministers or Church Governors within her Community.

XLV. But then it will be asked, (especially considering the Obscurity in which some Doctrines professed by divers Churches are involved) What *degree* of Assent is necessary [See §.XXV] for the making of such a Profession as a Church in both the Cases just now mentioned always requires? This was the third Difficulty proposed at the end of §. XLII. to which I now come to give a clear and distinct Answer. In order whereunto I take it for granted, that where no Assent is inwardly given, none can be outwardly professed; and that he who has no manner of Notion of the Meaning of a Doctrine, cannot possibly give his Assent to it. Upon which I lay down this as my first Conclusion, *viz.* That no Man ought to profess his Assent to any Doctrine, until he has some Notion of the Meaning of it. Let us suppose that the Twelve Apostles were now alive, and that they should propose a Doctrine in a Language which we do not at all understand; I might indeed in such a Case, and I should assent to their Veracity, and believe that whatever Doctrine they should propose were most certainly true: But for me to give a *direct* Assent to the Doctrine it self, would be impossible. For thus to assent to a Doctrine is neither more nor less than to acknowledge the Truth of it: And in the very Notion of

knowledging the Truth of a Proposition, *some* Apprehension, at least, of the *Meaning* of it is of necessity implied: And therefore before I can fully profess my Assent to any Doctrine, I must in some degree understand the Sense and import of it.

XLVI. Whether a Doctrine be true or false, there are degrees of *Apprehension*, even barely with respect to the *Meaning* of it. For Example, A Man of a clear and good Sight directly *understands* all that you say about Light and Colours: He, whose Eyes have, from his Infancy, been *very dim*, will in proportion to his Sight, have a less perfect and more confused Apprehension of your Discourse: But if a Man has been perfectly blind from his Birth, altho' it be impossible for him, for want of a proper Faculty, to have an *immediate or direct Idea* of any of the Objects or Instruments of Sight; yet by means of *Analogy, Similitude, or Comparison*, he so may have an Apprehension of them, as to be fully convinced that all that is said about Light and Matter, is not a multitude of Words without any signification at all, but really and truly has a *Meaning*; altho' he neither has nor can have any Conception of it, save what is begot in him by the means of some other of his Senses representing something unto him that bears some sort of proportion to those things, which, for want of his having proper Organs, can find no direct Entrance or Admittance into his Understanding: Of which I have given a more full account in the *Appendix to a Gentleman's Reliquary*. And that there are also degrees of *Assent*, with respect to the *Truth* of a Doctrine, in proportion to those both of Apprehension and Proof, have already shewn [§. XXVIII.] The second

Conclusion then which I lay down for the clearing up of this third Difficulty, is, that *the lowest or weakest degree of Assent to any Truth is a rational Foundation for the Regulation of Actions in conformity to it, (as I have shewn §. XXVIII.) so is it sufficient to warrant my Profession of it, whenever I am thereunto lawfully required; and that for the like Reason as I have there given.*

XLVII. Let us then suppose that the Question were put to one of a mean Capacity, whether he believes *the Resurrection of the Body*; may be he has but a very *obscure Notion of the Meaning of a Resurrection*, or what that is that shall arise, and of what Parts or Articles it shall consist. Again, when he considers the common Objections that have been made against this Doctrine, and particularly that of one human Body's Passage, through divers Changes, at last into the Nourishment of another, perhaps he is not without some *Doubt or Hesitation* in his Mind, even touching the Possibility of it. But on the other hand, when he comes to mind that the infinite Power of God is not to be measured by his scant Reason or Apprehension, and remembers how expressly the Resurrection of the Body is asserted in the Holy Scriptures, (of whose Authority we suppose him to be sufficiently convinced, §. XVIII.) although he is not able altogether to clear up that *Mistake or Doubt and Obscurity* which had taken Possession of his Mind, yet finding the Arguments for a Resurrection to have a greater Influence upon him than the Objections which are brought against it, his Assent inclines that way, (although after all, perhaps it is but weakly and faintly) and for this Reason I say that such a Man,

proper Occasions, may and ought to make an
 Profession of this, as well as of any other
 Article of the Christian Faith. But you will
 think it is such a weak and faint Assent as this
 is not sufficient to warrant a Man's saying, *All this*
I steadfastly believe, which is the Form of Profes-
 sion that the Church requires? I answer, that
 the *Firmness* of Belief does not consist in the
 Strength of that *speculative Assent* which a Man
 gives to any Doctrine, (which, properly speak-
 ing, is not within his Power, §. XXII.) but
 in that *Firmness of Purpose and Reso-*
lution, which he forms within himself, of lead-
 ing his Life in conformity to it. Let us sup-
 pose (for Example) that a Man is not free from
 Doubts even concerning the Truth of Chri-
 stianity, but yet, at the same time, with a
 fixt and settled Purpose of Heart, leads
 his Life in the very same manner as he would
 have thought to do, if his Persuasion concerning
 the Truth were as lively and strong as any Man
 Possessing it can be capable of entertaining: Such a
 Man as this, notwithstanding his Doubts in *Spe-*
culation, yet in the *practical* Sense of the Expres-
 sion is a *stedfast Believer*, and *holds fast the Pro-*
mission of his Faith without wavering, (Heb. 10. 23.)
 His true *saving Faith* is not to be measured by
 his *intrinseck Firmness*, (which, properly speaking,
 is rather a *Comfort* or a *Reward* than a *Duty*)
 but altogether by its *Fruitfulness* in holy Desires
 and good Works: Nor is this only agreeable to
 the main Tenour and Purport of the *New Testa-*
ment, but to the clearest and plainest *Reason* al-
 so, which abundantly assures us, that a wise
 and good God will never require that, as a Con-
 dition of Salvation on our part to be performed,

which most manifestly is beyond the Verge of our Power.

XLVIII. As far as a Man is at liberty to make Profession of his Faith and Religion in Words of his *own choosing*, he ought always to express his Thoughts in the *clearest* and *determinate* manner that he can. For no Reason can be imagined why a Man should make choice of such Expressions as are doubtful rather than those that are plain; except that he desires [by some at least] to be understood after a different manner from what he privately means within himself; which for Collusion or Dissimulation, as it is not excusable or justifiable in any Case whatsoever, so in Matters of Religion is it altogether wicked and damnable. But where a *certain Form* of Worship containing one or more Doctrines of Religion is *already settled* and established, and a Man is required, out of Peace and Unity, or in Obedience to lawful Authority, to profess his Assent thereunto, and that without imposing upon him requiring from him any manner of Confirmation or Explication. If there be no Sentence or Expression in that Form, but what is fairly capable of such an Interpretation as is in it true, I see no reason why any honest Man, having this apprehension of the Matter, may not subscribe or profess his Assent to it; provided that if at any time he be lawfully called upon to explain the manner in which he understands what he has thus subscribed or given his Assent unto, he do it clearly and explicitly, and, as much as lies in his Power, without any Ambiguity or Obscurity. For if the Words of such a Form are *doubtful*, why must I be obliged to understand them in such a Sense as com-

Doctrine, if they are fairly reconcilable to
 which is true? Or if they are very general
 of great latitude, What Necessity is there why
 should *restrain* or *limit* them at all, since the
 authority which imposed them has not thought
 neither to give or require any Explication
 Limitation of them, beyond what is con-
 tained in the Words themselves? And in order
 to lessen the Number of *unnecessary Controversies*
 in the Christian World, I wish it were serious-
 ly said to heart, *First*, That very often the
 dispute is not, *What has God commanded us to*
do or do not, (which yet is all that is necessary
 in Salvation, §. IV.) but only, *Is this particular*
doctrine true or not? (the Determination where-
 of may be of very little or no Concern perhaps
 to any Man, who by his Religion aims at no-
 thing but the Favour of God and everlasting
 Happiness.) Nor, *Secondly*, Whether *such or such*
doctrine, as it is nakedly delivered by the Church,
as it is clothed with this or that Interpre-
tation, Limitation, or Extension, be true? And
 if, for Peace sake, or in Obedience to Au-
 thority, I profess my Assent to any Doctrine of
 the Church; as I ought thereby to mean all
 that the Church has *expressed*, so is it most un-
 reasonable to expect any more from me. For
 if the Church had required more, why should
 she not plainly tell me so? And where She has
 made no Declaration of her Meaning, How is
 it possible for me to know it? You will say
 perhaps that the Sense of the generality of Men,
 eminent for Learning and Knowledge in every
 Church, is to be look'd upon as the Sense of
 the Church it self: But besides that, there is a
 great difference between the Sense even of every
 particular Man *apart, or in his private Capacity,*

and that of the *whole Society collectively*, in it self, or by its legal Representatives, that, in the midst of those various Explications of speculative Doctrines which often are adduced by learned Men even of the same Church it is not easy (especially for a Man of Learning) to determine what, in controverted Points, is the Sense of the *generality* of such eminent Men; it is sufficient to me that the Church does not require my Assent to this same Statement in case I were able to find it out and determine it, (for if She had required any such thing She ought to have said so, which She has not done) but only to those *particular Doctrines* which She has expressly established, and that in the very same (and none other) Words as She delivered them, however *general* or *comprehensive* they may appear to be. And if the Reader will but duly consider this, and at the same time take notice of the Account which (§. XXXI) I have given of the Word *Person*; and also remember that the Word [*Necessary*] very much imports not an absolute and indispensable necessity, but only denotes that such a thing is a *Duty*, and that the *Act of Assent* can be no farther a Duty than as I have explained it (§. XLI.) As also that these Expressions [*keep the Faith whole and undefiled, and to believe faithfully*] do carry no more in them than what (§. XLVII.) I have shewn to be the Meaning of *steadfastly to believe*: If (I say) the Reader considers all this, and has a greater Love of Peace and Unity than for Disputation and Con-

* Note, that what in the Athanasian Creed we translate, Before all things it is necessary, in the Greek is *πρὸ πάντων χρεόν*.

ly, and he will make no difficulty of subscribing, or saying *Amen*, to that *Creed* which comprehensively goes under the Name of *St. Athanasius*: as for our *Thirty Nine Articles*, let every Christian in them be taken in that *Generality* and *Latitude* with which they who composed them were content (for the Satisfaction of opposite contending Parties) to express themselves; and he may safely challenge any Man to find a false Proposition in any one of them: Nor therefore can I see the least Reason, why any Man, who is rightly informed and of a peaceable temper, should refuse, by his Subscription, to give such an Assent to them, as our Church requires from all who are admitted to Holy Orders.

A P P E N .

APPENDIX

FOR the more satisfactory clearing up of what I have said touching St. *Athanasius's* Creed, I think it not improper to give the Reader the following Paraphrase of it, in which I have retained all the Words of the Creed it self, and have them with interwoven such things as (in my Apprehension) are either pre-suppos'd by, contain'd or imply'd in, or evidently consistent with it, and necessary or useful, in order to the clear and understanding of it, I mean as far as we are capable, and the Belief of it is requir'd either of God or any Christian Church.

The PARAPHRASE.

How far God (whose Authority has no Limit but those of his own Attributes) has reserv'd to himself a Power either of barely pardoning (which is to say, not punishing) such Ignorance and Errors as are altogether (or in a great measure) involuntary, or of rewarding the sincere Endeavours of those who diligently seek after Truth, and yet miss of it, is none of my Intention at present to give my Thoughts, but whereas in

finite Wisdom he has thought fit in his Gospel to reveal and make known unto us a sure and plain Way to eternal Salvation, *whosoever*, according to this Way or Method thus made known to us, *will be eternally saved*, in the first place, and before all other things, it is incumbent on him and necessary that he so embrace and hold that Faith which was once deliver'd unto the Saints, [*Jude 3.*] which we commonly call *the Catholick* or universal Faith (because it was every where universally held and taught to all Christian Churches) as it may be a sufficient Foundation for the performance of all those Duties which God by the Gospel requires from him.

Which Faith, except every one to whom it is sufficiently propos'd or preach'd do, according to his capacity, embrace, and also keep whole and undivided without knowingly or carelessly giving way to any Doctrines or Practices that are contrary to and destructive of it, he is guilty of great Sin, and if he does not timely repent) *without doubt he shall be condemn'd by God, and perish everlastingly.*

And whereas no Doctrine is more plainly taught in the Gospel (as well as in the Law and the Prophets) than that there is but one God alone, and yet such things are as plainly said of the Father, the Son (or Word, as he is also call'd) and the Holy Ghost, as cannot agree to any but one God only, I am perswaded that the fundamental principle of *the Catholick Faith is this, that we so believe these things as that they may have a due influence on our Practice*; and as by our being Christians we dedicate our selves to the Service of the True Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so should we accordingly *worship one God in Trinity, and this in Unity in Unity.*

Neither

Neither confounding the Notion which we have of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as if there were no real Distinction between them, whom so often we find to be spoken of in Scripture in the very same Language as we always speak of Three distinct Persons, nor dividing in our Thoughts that Unity which we are taught to be in God, so as to apprehend or imagine that in the Divine Nature there is or can be more than one Substance or Spirit.

*For altho' it is impossible for the limited Capacity of Man to have full and adequate Notice of the things belonging unto God, which we know only in part (1 Cor. 13. 9.) or clear and distinct Ideas of what we only see as thro' a Glass (1 Cor. 13. 12.) or in a Riddle (Marg.) yet that there is not only a nominal, but a real Distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is made as plain as well may be from the free Expressions of the Holy Scripture, which I have just now hinted at, wherein these Three are always spoken of in the very same manner as we always speak of Three distinct Persons; therefore because I cannot find more proper Words to express my Thoughts of this Distinction (nor can any Words, I think, fully express it as it is in it self) I chuse to do it as near as I can by saying, that *there is one Person the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.* But I do not hereby mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are Three Persons after the same manner as Three Angels or Three Angels are Three Persons, all that I intend is to acknowledge and profess that Distinction which I believe to be between them, which comes nearer to that of Three Persons*

ch w Evangelical Persons (according to the afore-
 Ghost Expressions of Scripture) than any other
 ween representation that I can make, or that I find
 of im made of it; and however imperfect (for
 as w of sufficient Capacity or Information) my
 nor p hension of this Distinction may be, yet if
 nich w believe it as in Consequence thereof to
 end o one GOD in Trinity, and this Trinity
 is or om by my Baptism I have dedicated my
 in Unity, my Faith in this Point is suf-
 fited O to my everlasting Salvation.

Notw whilst I am thus setting forth, as well as
 we able, this Trinity of Persons, I think it
 and ary to profess, that all this is to be un-
 als d in such a manner (and none other)
 hat to be perfectly and fully consistent with the
 nction of God, for there neither is nor can be
 hly O than one God, and therefore I also ex-
 ne fr say, as I truly believe, that *the Divine*
ch Image, or Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and
ree the Holy Ghost, is all one and the very same,
ner all consequently the Glory equal and the Majesty
ons; eternal.

re p any one shall demand how this can be?
 is D what Possibility is there that one and the
 lly e Being should yet be Three? I can only
 t as, that when God shall be pleased to enlarge
 Perty Faculties (as he certainly will do if I ar-
 ber e to the Life of the Blessed in the World to
 ean me) when my present Knowledge, which is
 re in part, shall be done away, and that
 re uch is perfect shall come in its room (1 Cor.
 ll th. 13.) when I shall be blessed with seeing
 that as he is (1 John 3. 2.) or Face to Face,
 en and knowing him in some manner as I am
 H known of him (1 Cor. 13. 12.) then shall
 my

my Faith be turn'd into Knowledge, and I now only believe upon the bare Testimony of God's Word, I shall then have a clear distinct Apprehension of; but in the mean time for me to take upon me to offer any explication of this Mystery, whereby to make it clear in it self to the Reason and Understanding of Man as it is, or ought to be, in its own possibility to his Faith upon the Authority of Scripture, would be much the same as if a Man who never had Eyes, and yet believes something of Light and Colours from the many Discourses and analogical Representations which he has had of them from his honest Neighbours, should take upon him to write a Discourse of Colours; and as the same Demand may be made several times be made upon occasion of this, I am farther about to say touching the Testimony of my Faith, so I desire that (once for all) the Answer which I have now given may be suppos'd to be return'd to it; my Design is only to declare what I believe, either from the express Testimony of Holy Scripture, or from evident Consequences from it as I think considering Man can avoid; but to explain any thing that is no Object either of my Reason or Reason, but of my Faith only, and which God has not thought fit as yet to explain to me, as it is no part of my Undertaking, would it be an Attempt altogether as fruitless as every one must own it would be preposterous.

However from the Doctrine of a Trinity and the Unity of God, thus stated from the Scriptures, there are certain Consequences, which tho' I am not able to explain any more

the Doctrine it self, yet finding them so
 easily to follow, and divers if not all of
 to be plainly contained in the Holy Scrip-
 I am ready to embrace and profess
 not only because I believe them to be
 but also that I would willingly give Sa-
 tisfaction to all Christians, that under a ge-
 neral Confession of a Trinity and Unity in
 I do not secretly harbour any Explica-
 tion that is really destructive of that Doctrine
 outwardly and in Words I pretend to

For Example, One and the very same Di-
 vine Nature, Substance or Godhead, being com-
 mon to the Three Persons, we must of Necessi-
 ty, that *such as the Father is, such is the
 Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.*

That *the Father is uncreate, the Son uncreate,
 the Holy Ghost uncreate.*

That *the Father is, incomprehensible, the Son
 incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehen-*

And that *the Father is eternal, the Son eternal,
 the Holy Ghost eternal.*

But still because the Divine Nature is but
 one and the same, we must with the like Ne-
 cessity add, *And yet they are not three Eternals
 but one Eternal:* By which way of speaking we
 do not deny but that they are three Eternal
 Persons, (still understanding the Word Person
 in the Sense I have but now given it) only we
 say and mean that they are not three Eternal
 Gods, but one only.

Also, it is in the same manner to be un-
 derstood when we farther say, that *there are
 three Incomprehensibles, nor three Uncreated,
 but one Uncreated, and one Incomprehensible.*

So likewise our Confession is to be interpreted when we say *the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty.*

And yet they are not three Almighties, Almighty.

For so we expressly say, that *the Father the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God;* but one and the same Godhead or Divine Nature is common to the three Persons.

And yet that they are not three Gods, but one God; because we most firmly believe the Divine Nature neither is nor can be more than One.

And so likewise for the same Reason we say that *the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord.*

And yet that they are not three Lords, but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian Verity, contained in the Holy Scriptures, to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; because we there find the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be after that manner distinctly spoken of.

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion the same Scriptures comprised, to say, that there are three Gods or three Lords; because they expressly tell us that there is but one.

Farthermore, when also we speak of each of these Persons severally, and as they are distinguished one from the other, because the Divine Nature is far above our Understanding, we think ourselves still in like manner obliged either to the very Words of Scripture, or such as are exactly agreeable to the Tenour thereof, without taking upon us any farther to explain the

...yes, than what the Scripture has already
...for us.

...the Father then, as a distinct Person, we
...that he is made of none, neither created nor

...the Son we say, that he is the Son of
...Father alone, not made, nor created, but be-

...of the Holy Ghost we say, that he is the
...of the Father and of the Son, neither made,
...ated, nor begotten, but proceeding.

...Expressions I say we make use of, be-
...we find them exactly agreeable to Scri-
...and the Representation that is there
...of the Divine Oeconomy (if I may so
...) without pretending to explain the exact
...ing of the Words [Begotten and Proceed-
...or assigning the Difference between them,
...on this Occasion they are used, but al-
...their content with that Analogy which God
...us been pleased to signify that there is
...the to-us-incomprehensible things of him-
...and those of human kind with which we
...familiarily acquainted.

...then we are careful to maintain and as-
...the Unity of the Divine Nature or Sub-
...so do we think it our Duty also to
...our Belief of the Number and Distincti-
...Persons which the Scripture sufficiently
...us to be in the Godhead; it appearing
...evidently from the Word of God, that in
...Unity of Nature, Substance, or Essence,
...is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son,
...three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy
...; that is to say, three Persons, and nei-
...more nor less, according to the Explica-
...already given of the Word [Person.]

And

And since the Divine Nature, or Substance is one and the same, and common to all three Persons, it necessarily follow with respect thereunto, that in this Trinity none is afore or after another, none is greater or less than another.

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is herein declared and express'd, the Unity of God in the Trinity of Persons, and the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead is to be worshiped. And this is the fundamental Principle of the Christian Faith, into which all Christians are baptized, as Christ himself commanded to be baptized, Acts 28. 19.

But some perhaps will say, that they are willing to confess their Faith in the Words of Scripture, but not in any others that are of human Contrivance. I answer, that our Faith does not consist in this or that Form of Words, but in the Belief of the Things themselves which God has made known. And if any be troubled with scholastical or Scholastick Words, that have been made use of to express our Faith, may perhaps to some seem doubtful or not sufficiently clear, yet, such Words are always to be understood, and interpreted in compliance with the Scripture, which is the Rule of our Faith, and the Scripture in compliance with their proper Meaning. Good Christians may possibly be troubled about Forms of Expression; but since to worship one God in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity, is the fundamental Principle of the Christian Faith, (as has been already said) it follows, that he therefore that will do all the Uni-

Subordinarily necessary to *be saved* in that only,
 more and certain Way, which God has re-
 vealed and made known, *must thus think of the*
er, only, whatever Words he may happen to
 make use of for the more clear and better ex-
 pressing of his Thoughts. But since those Words
 which the Christian Church has so long made
 use of to express their Belief of this Mystery,
 being understood according to that Analogy
 in which the Holy Scripture often represents to be
 spiritual and sensible things, are so
 agreeable to the Words and Expressions
 the Scripture it self, it would, I think, be
 an Argument of an unquiet and unpeaceable
 temper in me, should I obstinately reject those
 Terms for no other reason but only because in
 their primary and literal Sense they do not
 agree unto the things they are made use of
 to express. If we must never speak of God
 in such Terms as in the most strict and
 literal Sense do agree unto him, for ought that
 we can find, we must for ever be silent about
 him, and neither demonstrate his Being, nor
 point out his Attributes, nor even set forth his
 Properties. But if all that we can possibly say
 of him, his Attributes and Actions, must of
 necessity be expressed not in literal but analo-
 gical Terms, (as I think is sufficiently to be
 gathered from what I have said in the fore-
 going Discourse, §. XXXIV, &c.) What ima-
 ginable Reason can be given why any Man
 should obstinately reject such sort of Terms
 when we come to speak of that Trinity which
 the Scripture so evidently represents to be in
 the Unity of the Godhead?

Furthermore, it is, in like manner, necessary for our *everlasting Salvation* (I mean in that ordinary way and method which God has settled and established under the Gospel) that he who believes the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Divine Nature, as is above set forth, should also believe rightly that the second Person of this Holy Trinity (who is called the Son, or the Word) did, in the Fulness of Time, assume a human Nature upon him, and become incarnate for our sake; which we commonly call the Doctrine of the *Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

For, altho' our weak and dark Reason is not able to explain or comprehend how or in what manner the Divine and Human Nature are conjoined together in one Person, any more than how three Persons can be united in the same Divine Nature; yet that the thing is really so, is so evidently to be collected from a great many Passages of Holy Scripture, that we give this Account of him, that we do not but acknowledge that *the right Faith is, to believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man*.

Being the Second Person of the Holy Trinity he is *GOD of the Substance of the Father* (with whom he is by Nature one) begotten before the Worlds from all Eternity, and he has been miraculously conceiv'd and born of a Virgin, we therefore say that he is *Man of the Substance of his Mother, born in the World*.

And the Divine and Human Nature being both compleat in him, we therefore farther press our Meaning by saying that he is *God and perfect Man, of a reasonable Soul and Human Flesh subsisting*.

That he is equal to the Father as touching his
 Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his
 Manhood.

Who, altho' he be really and truly both God
 and Man, yet, finding him always spoken of
 in Scripture in the same manner as we usu-
 ally speak of one single Person, we must of
 necessity say that *he is not two, but one Christ.*

And tho' we are not able fully to explain
 the Manner of the Unity of the Two Natures
 in Christ, as being altogether above our Com-
 prehension, yet, to prevent all Misapprehensi-
 on of our Meaning herein, we say that Christ
 was not by any Conversion of the Godhead into
 Man (which we take to be a thing in it self
 impossible) but by taking of the Manhood, which
 by Nature finite, into God, who is a Being
 infinite.

And this still to be understood without sup-
 posing any Mixture of the Divine and Human
 Substance (such as, for Example, there is be-
 tween Two different Liquors when they are
 mix'd together in one Vessel) for however God
 and Man are join'd in Christ, yet still the
 Divine and Human Nature in him remain di-
 stinct, tho' not separate one from the other;
 which reason we say that Christ is *one al-*
together, not by Confusion of the Divine and Hu-
man Substance, but by the Conjunction of God
and Man in Unity of Person.

For (to illustrate this Matter a little, as far
 as we are capable) as the reasonable Soul or Spi-
 rit and Human Flesh or Body is, and makes
 up one Man, in whom still the Spirit and Bo-
 dy, however closely join'd together, do yet truly
 retain their several and distinct Natures, so God

and Man, without any Alteration in Nature or Substance, is, and constitutes but one Person in *Christ*.

And this is he who suffer'd for our Sake descended into Hell, and rose again the third day from the Dead.

He ascended into Heaven, he sitteth on the Right Hand of the Father God Almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the *Quick* and the *Dead*.

At whose coming all Men shall rise again with their Bodies, and shall give Account for their Works.

And they that have done Good (that is they who have sincerely perform'd what God by the Gospel requires from us) shall go into Life everlasting, and they that have done Evil (that is they who have liv'd wickedly, and not made Peace with God by a timely Repentance) shall go into everlasting Punishment, which, for the Dreadfulness of it, is in Scripture represented by the Appellation of Fire.

This Doctrine which I have now been discoursing forth is, for Substance, the main and fundamental part of the *Catholick Faith*; however possible it is that they who agree in one and the same true Belief may yet (as I have already said) sometimes differ about the Words or Terms wherein they make Profession of it; if indeed a Man wants Capacity to apprehend these things, or sufficient Information to judge of them, so that his Error or Ignorance is thro' any Fault of his own, I pass no censure upon him, but leave him to stand or fall to his own Master; but as for those who have sufficient Capacity, but yet will not hearken to what is propos'd to them

in and by the Authority of God, or reject
 Doctrine that he has made known, be-
 cause it cannot be directly explain'd by or
 deduc'd from the Principles of Reason; or if
 any other Account a Man's want of Belief
 thro' his own Neglect or Fault, with respect
 to such a Man as this, I say, that this is that
 which except a Man receive when it is
 sufficiently propos'd to him, and believe so faith-
 fully, as sincerely and conscientiously to per-
 form the Duties that are ground'd upon it, he
 cannot be eternally saved.

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